

**Minutes of the Curriculum and Quality Meeting held on  
5<sup>th</sup> March 2024 at  
CBC, Dunstable  
16:00**

**Present:** Allan Schofield  
Cathy Barr  
Richard Dimbleby  
Sheila Selwood  
Yasmin Jones

**In attendance:** John Guiney (Group Director of Quality)  
Nick Hayward (Vice Principal (Adult Provision))  
Em Lowe (Deputy CEO Education)  
Rachel Nicol (Group Director of Governance)  
Natasha Stringer (Senior Governance Coordinator) (minutes)  
Robin Webber-Jones (The Principal (Northamptonshire))

**CQ/1/24 Apologies, declarations of interest and introductions**

Apologies

Apologies were received from Joe Gallacher, Luisa Vecchio and Yiannis Koursis.

Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest relevant to the matters on the agenda.

**CQ/2/25 Matters arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda**

The Group Director of Governance shared the Learner Attendance and Register Internal Audit Report with the Committee following a discussion at the Audit Committee as the topic was relevant to the Curriculum and Quality Committee.

The Deputy CEO Education provided the Committee with additional insight into the disciplinary process and policy, as well as the implementation and overall attendance patterns.

Questions and Discussions

The Committee commented on the high number of unmarked registers but noted that work is being done to improve them. The Committee briefly discussed the processes in place and acknowledged that more work was needed, but were pleased with the progress made so far.

The Committee raised concerns about student attendance, noting within the report that 48% of students were attending less than 90% of the time. The timeline for



improving this was sought, and the Deputy CEO Education provided assurances that it was anticipated to see an increase of 5 to 6% in attendance for the current academic year. The Committee also heard of some reward strategies that have been implemented, such as the Five-star awards to celebrate students and help create an environment that students want to attend. The Committee acknowledged some improvement but emphasised that attendance had yet to reach an acceptable level and expressed concern about the 32% of students in the red zone. The Committee recognised that there were some valid reasons for the poor attendance but stressed the importance of finding strategies to improve it. The Committee agreed that it was beneficial to have it highlighted within the audit report.

The Committee challenged the trigger set at 75% and agreed that it might need revisiting, as it could be misinterpreted to mean that 75% was all students needed to achieve. The Committee stressed the need for more triggers and a stronger message that maintaining good attendance was important.

The Committee discussed ways to improve the use of tutorial time and adjustments through the fitness-to-study process. They also discussed the importance of ensuring that all students were engaged in education, employment, or training to avoid situations where students become NEET (not in education, employment, or training). They noted that processes needed to be tightened up and that a firmer approach was required.

#### **The Committee noted the report.**

#### **CQ/3/24 Update on Curriculum Strategy, Accountability Statement and Duty to Review**

The Deputy CEO Education provided the Committee with a brief update on the business planning processes following the direction of travel agreed at the Strategy Day. ***The CEO will provide an accountability update, and the duty to review will be provided at the board meeting on 20th March 2024.***

#### **CQ/4/24 Academic Risk**

The Deputy CEO Education summarised the Academic Risks specific to the Quality of Education for the Committee, key points outlined where:

- The Bedford College Group are leading on a project on Green Skills and sustainability
- Reduction in inherent risk due to information coming more quickly from the DfE
- Staffing challenges. More resources are going to the recruitment team to ensure quicker responses.
- The Corby Sixth Form has got off to a good start, but both the Corby Sixth form and Bedford Sixth Form remain a risk



### Questions and Discussions

The Committee discussed the approach to contextualising risk around Prevent and Safeguarding and received assurances that each college has health and safety and safeguarding committees and partnership agreements in place.

A Committee member sought clarification on how the judgments of likelihood and impacts are arrived at. The Deputy CEO Education explained that it is a group effort.

### **The Committee noted the report.**

#### **CQ/5/24 Update on Sixth forms**

The Principal (Northamptonshire) presented an update on the Sixth Forms for the Committee, with the primary focus being the Bedford Sixth Form to update on issues and challenges with performance and the likely progress towards achieving KPIs. The update included:

- A number of concerns regarding student performance and experience came to light through the outcome of a full set of mocks, feedback, submission of UCAS applications and a Quality Review
- A lack of focus on planning in subjects
- Change in staffing and staff recruitment challenges
- The outcome of the mock results for TBSF, which included:
  - A reduction in high grades compared to September mocks
  - Increase in the volume of U grades
- A high number of students had not submitted UCAS applications by the first consideration deadline.
- Actions planned to be rapidly put in place to resolve the issues of gaps in leadership, ensure resources are in place and support is in place for students.

### Questions and Discussions

The Committee expressed disappointment that there had been no progress since the previous meeting's presentation. The Principal of Northamptonshire addressed staffing and cultural challenges, and the Committee sought and received assurances that management is addressing them.

The Group Director of Quality assured the Committee from a quality point of view, which included a member of the quality team now at the Bedford Sixth form every day, the priority is all the U grade and no value-added students are on strict intervention targets and action plans to support them. Previous data showed that teaching and learning was good, so there was disappointment with the number of U



grades. The importance of the students getting the support they need was emphasised, and quality is now supporting the planning element as well.

The Committee challenged the appropriateness of the curriculum, and the Principal (Northamptonshire) agreed that it had become apparent that it was not consistently right and there had been a lack of response from the management team when action had been needed; however, he stressed the importance of a phased approach in the solution.

The Committee expressed concerns for the current year 12s and urged focus on strengthening the curriculum to ensure value added for them and asked if high level external support had been considered. The Principal (Northamptonshire) confirmed that external resources were being explored.

The Committee discussed personal development and enhancement, which is in a much stronger position within the Bedford Sixth Form. The Committee questioned why the decision was made to move away from the Extended Project Qualification (EPQ). The Principal (Northamptonshire) said it is possible to review this moving forward.

The Committee discussed in detail the planned response and action plan for those students who had not completed a UCAS application by the deadline.

A Committee member raised a concern that the Committee had not been adequately informed of the challenges faced at the Sixth Form. The Principal (Northamptonshire) presented at the start of the academic year what they wanted to achieve for the Bedford Sixth Form, which they are not on track to achieve. Moving forward, more frequently reporting to keep the committee informed could be beneficial.

On reflection, the Committee felt it should not be too quick to take the assurances of leaders. The need for triangulation of information such as attendance, exclusion, data, action plans, timescales, benchmarking, and, where possible, governor visits would better aid governor assurances.

The Committee expressed concerns that, although they had heard about issues, they had not been informed to this extent, and there had been failures to identify and address these issues earlier. The Committee challenged the effectiveness of the staff and leadership appraisal process.

The Committee expressed concerns and asked how the Board could be confident in management, appropriate skills in quality oversight, and the appropriateness of assessment methods. The Deputy CEO Education mentioned a lack of internal



triangulation and the need to reflect on the process and use of resources to help support teachers.

A Committee member asserted that the Committee and Board had failed to exercise sufficient robust oversight and questioned what could be done in the future to avoid this happening again. The Principal (Northamptonshire) suggested more frequent reporting on underperforming areas.

**The Committee noted the report.**

#### **CQ/6/24      Updates from Local Curriculum and Quality Groups**

The Chair introduced the item and The Group Director of Quality summarised the feedback from the three local curriculum and quality groups for the Committee, which included:

- The Governors and members being able to get into classrooms, engage with learners and triangulate with KPI's
- Local community needs, looking at meeting the needs of the local community
- Positive feedback on the impact and value of the local focus

The Group Director of Quality shared that there had also been added value internally, including development opportunities for the quality managers. Additionally, positive responses were received from teachers whose classes had been visited, making them feel valued and appreciated.

**The Committee noted the report.**

#### **CQ/7/2024      HE update**

The Principal (Northamptonshire) summarised for the Committee the provided Higher Education update report, which included:

- The Principal (Northamptonshire) now holds executive responsibility for Higher Level Skills
- An action plan, in appendix 2, has been developed to ensure rapid action in key areas
- The HE Self Evaluation Document (SED), was provided as an appendix, although it was noted within the report that at this stage of the academic year, it is not relevant to look backwards but assurances were provided that going forward, it will be provided to the Committee at the same time as the SAR
- The Bedford College Group received its Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), which was a "Bronze" rating overall
- Work being done on defining roles and responsibilities within the team to form a Higher Skills team in line with the strategy being developed



- Challenges faced with regulatory compliance and missing deadlines: a calendar for submissions is being put together.

### Questions and Discussions

The Committee enquired as to how long the TEF rating would be valid, and the Principal (Northamptonshire) confirmed that it was for a four-year period and explained the formulaic approach to TEF submission. The Committee questioned the "insufficient evidence" remark in the TEF report and asked whether the evidence was not gathered or if the college did not provide that feature to students. The Deputy CEO Education clarified that only a small number of people were involved and had control over the process and submission, leading to a failure to gather evidence.

The Committee expressed concern about the lack of visibility or knowledge of the TEF prior to its submission and emphasised the necessity of reviewing the TEF process and other regulatory submissions in the future. The Committee raised concerns that the TEF may have been submitted without adequate review by the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and governors.

***The Committee noted that a minor amendment to Access and Participation Plan will include the addition of CBC.***

***It was agreed that The Bedford Sixth Form and HE will be standing items on the agenda until the risk has reduced.***

**The Committee noted the update.**

### **CQ/8/24      Quality dashboard and academic performance**

The Group Director of Quality and the Deputy CEO Education summarised the quality dashboard and academic performance report for the Committee, highlights included:

- Attendance
  - All provisions are showing an increase when compared to the same time last year but are not yet meeting internally set targets
  - English and maths still below internal target
- Retention
  - All colleges are above 95% retention for 16–18-year-olds except for the Bedford sixth form
  - Focus placed on planning, delivering and supporting interventions for students who are not meeting, through mocks and predictions, their value-added scores.



### Questions and Discussions

The Committee had a detailed discussion about the quality dashboard presentation and the data presented. They discussed what additional information would be beneficial to include. The Committee requested a more detailed scorecard that would incorporate the triangulation of Ofsted outcomes, judgments, attendance, and more, in order to help the governors visualise the data more effectively.

***The Corporation Chair confirmed he'd had conversations with the CEO about developing the dashboard and it will be shared with the Committee and Board before finalisation.***

**The Committee noted the report.**

### **CQ/9/24      Quality Improvement Plan**

The Group Director of Quality provided and summarised the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) for the Committee, explaining the different QIPs between the Group, Colleges, and departments.

### Questions and Discussions

The Committee discussed the future approach to the Quality Improvement Plan, assessment, and feedback, as well as the need for indicators that more accurately reflect the position and the need to focus on the target rather than the outcomes and the process behind them.

***It was agreed that extracts of more detailed QIPs for areas under focus will be brought to future meeting.***

**The Committee noted the report.**

### **CQ/10/24      Stakeholder feedback**

The Vice Principal (Adult Provision) summarised the provided report on stakeholder voice for the adult curriculum strand which included:

- Challenges in surveying are being addressed, including the number of neutral responses and the relevance of question language
- Areas of improvement include safeguarding, wellbeing and quality assurance
- Areas of development include teaching, learning and assessment.
- There is a process issue from advice and guidance through to output of destination and career, causing a lack of clarity on output and impact

- Business planning with Heads of Departments focusing on the need to be able to articulate how we impact on social value outputs and economic value outputs and being able to link back to accountability

### Questions and Discussions

The Committee enquired about the social value output and the criteria used to measure those outcomes. The Vice Principal (Adult Provision) mentioned that the Department for Education (DfE) expects to see it measured in health and wellbeing, confidence, and other similar areas. It is noted that the measurement of these outcomes is quite subjective.

The Committee discussed the survey results and the need to share best practices across the group. Work is being done to synchronise the voices of students aged 19 and above.

The Committee requested an update on distance learning students. The Vice Principal (adult provision) shared that the learning centres had recently moved into intervention and there had been a change in management. However, there has been quick progress and assurances was given that distance learning students are achieving. ***The Committee requested a short report on the learning centres, and distance learning.***

### 10.2 Stakeholder Feedback HE

The Principal (Northamptonshire) summarised the report for the Committee.

The Committee enquired as to why there had been a decline in performance at Shuttleworth, The Principal (Northamptonshire) shared that there is a change to the curriculum planned.

### ***The Bedford local group to receive a report on Shuttleworth***

#### **CQ/10/2024 External assurance**

The Group Director of Governance provided a paper on external assurance for the Committee and Governors were invited to provide comments on anything else required.

**The Committee noted the report.**





**CQ/11/2024 Minutes of the meeting on 23 November 2023**

**The Minutes of the meeting held on 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2023 were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.**

*The meeting ended at 18.32*