

## Priestley College

Minutes of the Curriculum & Standards Committee meeting  
held at 4.30pm on Thursday, 26 March 2015  
in the Conference Room (P1.16)

<b>PRESENT:</b>	Mrs D Stead	Chair
	Mr D Cathie	Student Member
	Mr B Craven	Student Member
	Dr M Hartill	
	Mrs K Hope	Staff Member
	Mr L Horrigan	
	Mrs C Owen	
	Mr Y Shaikh	
	Ms K Simcock	
		Mr P McMellon
<b>IN ATTENDANCE:</b>	Mr G Contos	Vice Principal – Curriculum & Standards
	Ms J Costello	Director of Performance Man. (Item 5)
	Mrs A Marren	Equality & Diversity (Items 7 & 8)

### 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Mr M W Grant.

### 2. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest.

### 3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 February 2015 were accepted as an accurate record and signed by the Chair.

### 4. MATTERS ARISING

#### (i) Item 4 : College Self Assessment Report

Mr G Contos (Vice Principal – Curriculum & Standards) confirmed that, following the Governing Body's acceptance of the Committee's recommendation (on ICT Curriculum Area's conversion from Grade 2 to Grade 1), the College's entry on the national portal had been suitably updated.

#### (ii) Item 7 : SEND Policy

It was noted that the on-line training package had been made available to all Governors following the report at the last meeting of the Governing Body (5 March 2015). The Chair commented on the impressive breadth of information and guidance which the package provided and encouraged all members to take time to examine the material

### **(iii) Item 8 : Policy Review – Bullying & Harassment Policy**

The Committee noted that, in approving the revised document, the Governing Body had also changed the title of the Policy to the “Anti-Bullying and Anti-Harassment Policy”. The Clerk undertook to distribute copies of the final version to Committee members.

## **5. QUESTIONNAIRE : NEW STUDENTS (2014/15)**

Ms J Costello (Director of Performance Management) presented the results of the annual survey of new starters, as conducted in November 2014. She reminded the Committee about the basis of the survey and confirmed that, with 775 completed questionnaires, a higher proportion of new starters had contributed than in the previous year. She also pointed out that Free School Meals status had been included in the analysis for the first time.

The levels of response had, unsurprisingly, been slightly down on the previous year’s all-time highs, but the overall level remained reassuringly high, with no response score being lower than 3.95 (out of 5 maximum).

The Committee then asked Ms Costello to comment on factors and developments which were assumed to have contributed to the individual question scores, and particularly to those which showed a down-turn.

In noting that the response to the Moodle question (Q12) had improved significantly, the Committee discussed the remedial measures which had followed last year’s survey messages.

The Committee then examined the analyses by gender, LLDD and FSM, noting where variances indicate that further investigation might be called for. There were lower levels of satisfaction on the IT-related questions for the LLDD and FSM students.

The responses from students on Level 2 courses were considered, and it was recognised that the slightly lower levels of satisfaction might be attributable to initial disappointment on course placement.

In broad terms, the Committee agreed that the survey results appeared to confirm a very high level of satisfaction amongst new starters.

The Committee then considered the narrative comments, noting the further information (including from the Student Governors) on issues such as ‘egging’, motorbike parking and the referral system ( to assist students who are struggling to acclimatise to the College). The latter matter included discussion on alternative points of contact/referral. With regard to the smoking area comments, the Student Governors felt that the general view among students was that smokers ought to be content with and remain within the designated area for smokers.

Other general observations from Mr D Cathie included ideas on the pacing of induction (possibly too rapid for some LLDD students) and the College’s catering facilities. Arrangements for assisting students ‘under stress’ were also considered, including the availability of guidance on study planning (including preparation for examinations).

Mr Y Shaikh suggested that, as well as obtaining student views on arrangements/practices already in operation, consideration might usefully be given (with a view to bolstering student attendance/retention efforts) to obtaining views on future intentions and expectations.

The Chair thanked Ms Costello for her report.

## **6. “PREVENT” : RISK ASSESSMENT**

Mr G Contos (Vice Principal – Curriculum & Standards) presented the initial assessment of issues which College Management had developed in response to Prevent obligations. He commented on each of the seven ‘Issues’ identified in the paper presented. The Committee noted the actions

which the College had already taken or was preparing to take. These all seemed appropriate and timely.

Under the 'Population/demographic' issue, the population data for Warrington was discussed, together with the consequent implications under the 'Prevent' agenda.

Under the 'Training/awareness' issue, the proposals for further training for staff and Governors (ie., additional to that which had taken place at the recent Governance Seminar) were noted.

The Committee then questioned the wording under the 'Promoting ethos' issue and concluded that the first statement in the 'Current position' column might be modified so as to avoid the suggestion that it is only 'young people' who make 'very poor and rash decisions'.

It was recognised that, in order to comply with the national 'Prevent' agenda, there may be limits on the extent to which the College can/should seek to modify the related documentation. Ms K Simcock advised on a number of aspects of the national policy and on the perceived role for colleges such as Priestley College. She agreed that the development of resilience (against radicalisation) via the curriculum and through the ethos of the College would be a key factor. This should complement all the other initiatives/measures already discussed. It should, of course, be recognised that treatment via the curriculum required good judgement and sensitivity.

## **7. EQUALITY & DIVERSITY**

### **(i) Annual Report on 2013/14**

Mrs A Marren presented the report on the previous academic year. She drew particular attention to the action planning to address identified 'gaps' and to the different issues/approaches applicable to each curriculum area. It was noted that a number of - but not all - 'gaps' from the previous year had been effectively addressed. In discussing the male/female balance, it was recognised that there would always be an imbalance (reflective no doubt of the area's demographics) at the aggregate College level, but the position at curriculum area level indicated that there were issues which needed to be addressed.

Mrs Marren then provided an additional 'Update' which showed how/where progress had been made or attempted since the end of the previous academic year. This covered measures on the Quay student management system, the physical environment (including doors/LLDD access), staff training and the Learner Voice. She also commented on measures in line with the College's 'positive promotion' duty.

The Chair drew attention to the 'Widening Participation Uplift' bar chart and to the 'gap' which was illustrated in that category of student.

The Committee asked for examples of the 'embedding of equality and diversity' in the curriculum. It was noted that some areas/subjects achieved this more effectively than others.

The Committee also discussed the ethnicity position (students and staff) and approved the increase – albeit slight – in participation of BME students. As regarded the gender balance, and having noted the local demographic position (Item 6 above), it was agreed that comparisons/benchmarking with the sixth form colleges sector might be useful (if such comparable data is available). Mr L Horrigan advised on the gender composition as evident at local schools.

Mr G Contos reminded the Committee about the cross-references to equality/diversity which are included in the College Improvement Plan (Item 9 below)

### **(ii) Single Equality Scheme Action Plan 2014/15**

Mrs Marren then presented the Action Plan covering the current academic year.

The Committee examined each section of the report on 2014/15 which Mrs Marren had provided with the agenda papers.

It was agreed that there were appropriate targets for achievable progress and that progress to-date was sufficient.

Finally, it was agreed that the SES Action Plan would be enhanced by the incorporation of RAG rating as per other College plans.

The Chair thanked Mrs Marren and other staff who had contributed towards the production of the reports.

## **8. POLICY REVIEW : RACE EQUALITY POLICY**

Mrs Marren presented the new draft Policy. She confirmed that the new version was an entirely different format, although it covered broadly the same commitments and duties. She cross-referenced the document to the actions and targets in the SES Action Plan (Item 7(ii) above).

Mr Y Shaikh noted that, in recent years, there had been no complaints or issues of a race equality nature in College.

The Chair asked Mrs Marren to remind the Committee about the use of the equality impact statement which the draft included. It was agreed that the impact assessment practices used by the College remained valid.

**RESOLVED : That the revised Race Equality Policy is approved.**

In line with the Committee's delegated powers, it was agreed that there was no call for further referral to the Governing Body.

## **9. COLLEGE IMPROVEMENT PLAN - UPDATE**

Mr G Contos (Vice Principal – Curriculum & Standards) presented the latest version of the College Improvement Plan, updated and now including a completed 'monitoring' column.

Mr Contos then went through each issue, reporting on the effectiveness of the remedial measures. He confirmed that only 'amber' or 'green' ratings were called for under the RAG system in use.

The Committee then discussed the impact of revision classes (under 'The progress students make on a minority of AS and A2 programmes'). It was noted that the effectiveness of this provision remained under review.

**RESOLVED : That the updated College Improvement Plan is approved.**

## **10. STUDENT RETENTION & ATTENDANCE**

Mr G Contos (Vice Principal – Curriculum & Standards) presented the student retention data as at 27 February 2015. He confirmed that overall the rate of retention was slightly lower than in the previous year. In discussing this, the factors which accounted for early leavers – and particularly the apprenticeship scheme - were noted.

Mr Contos advised on the actions designed to combat early leaving, and specifically on the 'case conference' approach now used to investigate. He gave examples of the issues which had emerged from case conferences, serving to demonstrate that there were frequently very complicated circumstances behind each case.

The Committee then reflected on possible postcode-related factors and also on Free School Meal indicators.

On student attendance, Mr Contos confirmed that the Period 3 (up to Spring half-term) figures showed an improvement against the Period 2 figures, although the overall position for the current year was slightly lower than in 2013/14.

**11. STUDENT RECRUITMENT AND CURRICULUM UPDATE**

Mr G Contos (Vice Principal – Curriculum & Standards) reported that the number of applications for September 2015 were down (compared to the current year) by 100. Although the number of acceptances was higher than in the previous year, the College still needed to attempt to bridge the shortfall.

In endorsing the measures which Mr Contos described, the Committee also noted the local demographic position which undoubtedly contributed to the student recruitment challenges.

**12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting will be at 4.30pm on Thursday, 18 June 2015.

PMcMellon  
27 March 2015

*Accepted as a true record and signed by the Chair*

*Signature* .....

*Date* .....