

Priestley College - Curriculum and Standards Committee

Minutes of the Meeting Held on 13.10.2016

Present: Kelly Simcock (Chair), George Contos, Dr. Mike Hartill, Oliver Lister, Zhora Najimi, Yousuf Shaikh

Apologies: Mhairi McAuley, Bev Scott-Herron

In Attendance: Dr. Carsten Kressel (Minutes)

Membership

The Chair welcomed Mr. Lister and Miss Najimi to their first meeting following their election as staff governor and student governor respectively. She informed governors that Mrs. Scott-Herron will chair the committee during her imminently impending maternity leave. Governors noted Mr. Horrigan's resignation from the governing board.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of personal or pecuniary interest in the matters to be discussed were made.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 23.6.2016 were **agreed** as a true and accurate record and signed by the Chair.

Matters Arising

Governors noted that actions 1 and 2 from the meeting held on 23.6.2016 had been completed.

Action 3 - The college does not survey parents at the moment but intends to start doing so again.

Action 4 - Mr. Contos will email Mr. Horrigan with application figures from Future Tech.

Action 1: *Mr. Contos to email Mr. Horrigan with application figures from Future Tech.*

College Performance Report

Mr. Contos presented the college update report, which had been updated with judgements for the different types of qualification. The judgements for most areas show maintained or improved judgements compared to last year.

Mr. Contos highlighted the following points for the different qualification types: -

A-Level

- The value added has increased to very good, as more students have attained high grades.
- Out of 47 qualifications, 22 have improved the value added, 14 have maintained it and 11 have declined.
- Areas for attention and improvement are geology, French and Spanish.

- The success rate for students over the age of 19 is below that of all colleges and will be monitored closely.

AS-Level

- The college has achieved the highest success rates for three years, in attainment, value added and retention.
- Out of 49 qualifications, 21 had improved their value added, 14 stayed the same and 11 declined.
- Areas for improvement in the category of value added are French and geology.

Governors asked the following questions: -

- How is the score in maths to be interpreted? - Answer: The pass rate is good, but the value added is not as high as it might be expected by looking at the attainment figure, due to high prior attainment of the students.
- Is the cohort in maths polarised or is the outcome an issue of lacking differentiation? - Answer: It would be necessary to review individual cases to identify reasons for the performance in maths.
- Why has the number of triple-As dropped significantly? - Answer: This drop appears to reflect a national trend, but the reasons will be analysed.

Action 2: Analyse the reasons for the drop in triple-As at AS level.

Cross College Extended Project Qualification

The success rate for the Cross College Extended Project Qualification is below national figures, and the retention rate has dropped. This is an area for attention for the college.

Vocational Qualifications

Retention is not an issue in the area of vocational qualifications, and the achievement has improved, standing above the average for all colleges and sixth-form colleges nationally. However, the age group of students over the age of 19 requires attention.

Extended Diplomas

There has been a slight dip in higher grades and value added.

Level 2 and 3

Value added in some level 2 and 3 courses has dipped and will receive attention where appropriate.

GCSE

Maths and English have done relatively well at A* to C passes, but the college is not satisfied with the pass rate at A* to C in science. It is also working to improve functional skills in maths this year.

In the vocational area, areas for focus this year are 19+ students, Level 2 diplomas and functional skills, Level 3 extended project qualifications, and attendance.

Governors asked if the results and value added of several small subjects or qualifications can be aggregated to calculate an average, in order to establish how these small subjects perform in general.

Action 3: *Calculate an average of several small subject areas to gauge their overall performance.*

Governors commended the good performance of the college this year.

Student Survey

Mr. Contos reported that the survey had been conducted in order to explore in more detail issues that had become apparent in the teaching and learning survey in the spring term. The new survey had particularly concentrated on aspects of well-being, safeguarding and exam preparation. The college was pleased with responses to the Prevent agenda and the fact that students feel safe. Furthermore, the new survey had shown that the students feel prepared by the college for the coursework and exams but that they do not always do enough to prepare themselves.

Governors asked the following questions: -

- What does the college do to promote British values and prevent radicalisation? - Answer: This work is mostly done through the tutorials, but the college has also mapped out how the message can and will be integrated into the curriculum.
- What happens during choices week? - Answer: Choices week aims to prepare the students for university or work. It takes place after the exams.
- Why do the students not appear to value choices week?

Action 4: *Explore why students do not appear to value choices week.*

Student Recruitment

Mr. Contos reported that 40-50 fewer students had enrolled this year compared to last year, bringing the total student number to 2022. The drop in enrolments reflects the general drop in sixth-form student numbers across Warrington, and Priestley has succeeded in maintaining or slightly increasing its share of students compared to the overall number of high school leavers. However, there has been a drop in the recruitment of students, who have had a year out following high school.

Curriculum Update

Governors noted successful recruitment in the new areas of environmental sustainability (14 students) and engineering (two groups of 13 students). They were concerned to learn of the recent, unexpected announcement by AQA of their intention to withdraw support for the qualification in archaeology. Some 33 students currently study this subject (18 at AS level and 15

at A2 level), and several of them proceed to study it at university each year. The college, together with other colleges nationally, will try to get the AQA to reconsider and reverse their decision.

Governors asked if the numbers in engineering are low. Mr. Contos clarified that the college is satisfied with the number, as they are additional to those students on the traditional pathway of maths and physics.

Action 5: *Keep the development of student numbers in engineering under review.*

Learning Support (Bursary) Fund (Annual Report)

Governors noted the annual report on the learning support (bursary) fund and **asked** why the number of students accessing the fund had declined.

Action 6: *Establish reasons for the decline in the number of students accessing the learning support (bursary) fund.*

Quality Framework Update

Governors noted the updated quality framework. Most changes concern updated names of lead practitioners and the introduction of progress tutors at AS level.

Governors asked what progress tutors are and what distinguishes them from personal tutors. Mr. Contos explained that progress tutors are meant to support students in the same way as personal tutors did in the past. The main difference is that they do this work exclusively, with the aim to improve efficiency and consistency. The college is monitoring the effectiveness of this initiative. So far, it appears to work.

Assessment Policy Amendment

Governors noted the amendments made to the Assessment Policy, which affect the following areas: -

- Combination of the work being done in respect of English and maths.
- Teaching and learning survey;
- A changed tracking system to eliminate duplication of work for teachers. In future, parents will be informed directly if the students work at grade.

Any Other Business

None.

Date and Time of the Next Meeting

17.11.2016, 4.30 pm.

The meeting was closed at 5.55 pm.

Action Log - October 2016

No.	Description	Responsible
1	<i>mail Mr. Horrigan with application figures from Future Tech.</i>	Mr. Contos
2	<i>Analyse the reasons for the drop in triple-As at AS level.</i>	Mr. Contos
3	<i>Calculate an average of several small subject areas to gauge their overall performance.</i>	Mr. Contos
4	<i>Explore why students do not appear to value choices week.</i>	Mr. Contos
5	<i>Keep the development of student numbers in engineering under review.</i>	Mr. Contos
6	<i>Establish reasons for the decline in the number of students accessing the learning support (bursary) fund.</i>	Mr. Contos