



SOUTH GLOUCESTERSHIRE AND STROUD COLLEGE
FURTHER EDUCATION CORPORATION

LEARNING AND QUALITY COMMITTEE

Approved minutes of the meeting of the Learning and Quality Committee
Held on Monday 11 March 2024
Via Microsoft Teams

Present:

Lynne Craig	Corporation Member & Chair
Matt Atkinson	Corporation Member
Douglas Blackstock	Corporation Member

In attendance:

Gavin Murray	Deputy Principal
Gary Parsons	Staff Member
Sara-Jane Watkins	College Principal
Sharon Glover	Clerk

The Chair opened the meeting by recording the Committee's congratulations for the College's hard work in support of the recent Ofsted inspection.

1. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received from Andres Garcia-Knight (Staff Governor).

2. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest raised.

3. **Items of Urgent Business**

There were no items of urgent business.

4. **Minutes of Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held 13 November 2023 were approved as a correct record, ready for signing by Chair.

5. **Matters Arising From Those Minutes**

Members noted that there were no outstanding actions on the action log.

6. **Top 5 Areas of Concern**

Confidential Item.

7. **Curriculum briefing and Skills Strategy**

The Principal reported that portfolio reviews had been completed which had fed into the curriculum development, pre-Ofsted inspection. Ofsted had been positive about the College's planning process and the strength of the Skills Strategy. In the accompanying papers there was a briefing containing the overarching curriculum priorities and how the College is responding to LSIP/WECA regional priorities.

Members questioned whether there is a budget in support of the expenditure. The Principal informed that the portfolio review priorities form the basis of capital expenditure which comes together when the budget is presented for Corporation approval in July. Members asked for notification of which ambitions can be afforded as all of them were good.

Members also questioned the strategy for Queen's Road as the intent is to retrench. The Principal advised that decisions on Queen's Road form part of the overall Estates strategy as there is a need to consider what happens to the learners based there.

Members questioned the need for strategies to be presented on a yearly basis, if based over a 3-year period, unless material changes are needed. It was suggested that the curriculum strategic update document is presented to Corporation to keep them updated, with the remainder of the documents added to the Document Library.

Members sought assurance in relation to the staffing needs for apprenticeship degrees and were informed that these are subject to future review. The current view is to remain with the current SGS partner of the University of Gloucestershire. However, it was reported that UoG have undergone a restructure and although no immediate impact on SGS, longer term there may be a capacity issue. It was questioned whether the College's higher education provision was viable and were informed that the strategic driver was Higher Technical Qualifications and Lifelong Learning Loans. The Committee acknowledged that the general direction of travel for higher education may be discussed as part of the next Governors' Strategy Away Day.

Following discussion, it was agreed that there is no need for an updated Skills Strategy to be presented annually unless there were major amendments but it was helpful for the Committee to receive the outcomes of the portfolio reviews and priorities. It was also suggested that the Executive Team should work together to save on the documents being produced for the Committee in order to reduce overlaps.

The report was noted.

Action: Principal.

8. **Higher Education Strategy**

The Deputy Principal presented the report, which provided a progress update in support of the Higher Education strategy. The Chair suggested that the

summary report is added to the Document Library on Convene to keep all governors updated.

Members discussed the expectations of OfS in relation to retention, completion and progression and noted that the headline level is above the OfS benchmark. The Deputy Principal provided assurance that the College did usually achieve higher than the benchmark and that there are no concerns in relation to regulated higher education. However, there are some concerns relating to some Level 4/5 provision in relation to the rigor of quality. Close working with the delivery teams is taking place together with support provided.

Another area of concern is retention, due to the high incidences of mental health issues and a loss of learners is anticipated. By nature of the size of the programmes this will result in low retention rates. It is believed that this cohort is the most affected by the pandemic and support is being provided to the individuals concerned.

Members raised that reference had been made to issues at the University of Gloucestershire and asked if there were any strategic concerns. Members were assured of security with the College's degree programme, following a restructure at the University. However, moving forward there may be the need to re-align some of SGS programmes and is an area that requires close attention.

The report was noted.

9. **Quality Strategy**

The Chair raised that revisions to the Quality Strategy had been based on the recent Ofsted inspection, of which the final report was awaited. Although the ambition to swiftly progress was commendable, it was agreed to defer this item to the next meeting at which point the Ofsted report would be widely available and the Governors' Strategy Away Day held.

Members raised that there was a complex infographic appended to the Quality Strategy and were informed that this proved useful to staff to assist with expectations.

The Deputy Principal advised that he had just received the final Ofsted report and would share with the Committee in advance of its publication.

Action: Deputy Principal.

10. **Voice of the Learner report**

Following receipt of the report, members questioned whether progress is being made with catering concerns. Members were informed that forums are being held between caterers, staff and students and, although early days, alternatives are being investigated.

Members raised that the levels of satisfaction were impressive and questioned whether the return rate was statistically viable. Members were informed of a return rate of 72%, which was statistically significant but there is ongoing discussion about future survey sample size. It was however pleasing that there was a correlation between the outcomes and the findings from Ofsted.

Members were surprised that there were more negative learner views than expected, especially with Voice of the Learner meeting outcomes. The Deputy Principal confirmed the intent to run learner focus groups to investigate specific areas.

The report was noted.

11. **KPI report**

The Deputy Principal presented the report and raised a revision to the Teaching, Learning and Assessment chart following feedback from the Chair of the Corporation about its lack of clarity.

Members then discussed SGS's philosophy on the setting of homework as hardly anyone saw this being set. Although there is an expectation that homework is regularly set there are discussions as part of the improvement plan to ensure that homework is set in electronic mark books. There is also a push towards more work scrutiny rather than Joint Lesson Observations. Members suggested that the questions being asked are given consideration as this can have an impact on responses.

The Deputy Principal advised that the next report will demonstrate the difference between periods of time so changes over next term will be expected. He also agreed to provide feedback to staff to consider the usefulness of questions being asked.

Members then discussed about Learning Support Assistants and were informed that this model is being reviewed. Members asked to have more understanding of the information that sits underneath those KPIs rated as Red as this would help with strategic decision making. It was suggested that the worse performing areas by campus are reported to the Committee. At the next meeting, the Committee asked for a report on retention/achievement showing the best and worse 5 curriculum areas broken down by campus. The Deputy Principal also agreed to try and pick this out in the covering report to the Committee. It was recognised that behaviour is the main concern.

The report was noted.

Action: Deputy Principal.

12. **Teaching, Learning & Assessment Report**

The Deputy Principal provided an oral update on the Ofsted inspection, which had received an overall "Good" outcome. Areas for improvement were shared with the Committee. Members raised the need to think strategically about

Stroud campus and its vision, mission, character and purpose moving forward and suggested this is an area for consideration at the Governors' Strategy Away Day. The Deputy Principal indicated future growth of High Needs learners over the next few years and the impact this would have on SGS was of concern.

The report was noted.

13. **FE & HE Improvement Plans**

Members received the FE and HE Improvement Plans and questioned whether the FE plan would change as a result of the Ofsted inspection. The Deputy Principal advised that there is a desire for the development of a post-inspection action plan. However, the College Self-Assessment report had been very frank with actions from the Improvement Plans flowing from this. Therefore, it was important to continue with these plans.

Due to the complexity of the plans, Members asked if there are key areas not making progress. Assurance was provided that progress is being made against all actions with some actions being considered as longer-term and iterative. Members questioned whether TeacherMatic would assist the College and the Deputy Principal expressed caution about its use. The Ofsted focus being on what the College is doing to help move their learners forward.

The report was noted.

14. **SGS Create**

This was covered in agenda item 6.

15. **Committee membership**

The Chair advised that the membership of this committee was very lean, especially with the departure of Paul Farrell. Following discussion, it was agreed to recommend to Corporation that the two Staff Governors are included in the Committee's membership and invite replacement for Paul. It was recognised that two of the new Corporation members recently appointed have experience that would strengthen the Committee, but the timings of meetings may need future consideration. It was suggested that the co-option of external individuals could also be given consideration at a future meeting.

It was resolved:

- a) **To recommend revisions to the Committee's terms of reference in that the two Staff Governors are included in the Committee's membership.**
- b) **To appoint Gary Parsons (Staff Governor) and Andres Garcia-Knight (Staff Governor) to this Committee.**
- c) **To invite Corporation to consider the replacement of Paul Farrell on the Committee.**

16. **Date of Next Meeting**

Thursday 20 June 2024, 10.30am, Stroud Campus.

The Chair raised that there should be the availability to join the meeting via Teams, if needed.

The meeting commenced at 9.33am

Sara-Jane Watkins left the meeting at 10.19am (during item 7).

The meeting closed at 11.22am

The meeting was quorate.