

NORTHERN REGIONAL COLLEGE

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Minutes of the open meeting of the Education Committee held on 19 March 2013 at the Ballymena Campus, Northern Regional College.

Present Mr R Jay (Chairperson), Mr M Murray, Mr T Neilands (Principal) and Mr K Nelson. Members of Governing Body present: Mr G Gilpin, Mr S Davidson, Dr D Lennox.

In Attendance Mrs S Kennedy, Mrs C Moore, Dr C O'Mullan and Mr J Hunter

UNRESERVED BUSINESS

16.1 Apologies

Apologies were received from Mrs K Collins, Mrs I Allison, Alderman J Brown, Mr J Clyde, Mrs J Eve, Mr I Goldsworthy, Alderman PJ McAvoy, Mr S McCartney, Mrs G McConnell and Mrs A Rankin. It was noted that Mrs Eve had been admitted to hospital and Mr Gilpin undertook to make contact with her family to pass on the Governing Body's wishes for a speedy recovery.

16.2 Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interests.

16.3 Minutes of Last Meeting

The minutes of the last meeting of the Education Committee, held on 26 February 2013, were approved.

16.4 Matters Arising

There were no matters arising from the minutes of the last meeting.

16.5 Chairperson's Communications

There were no Chairman's communications.

16.6 Correspondence

There was no correspondence to report.

16.7 College Inspection

The Committee was joined by a number of Members of the Governing Body to discuss:

a) The Report of an Inspection of the Further Education and Work-Based Learning Provision in the Northern Regional College, which indicates that the overall quality of further education and training provided by the College, across the areas inspected, is satisfactory. The Further Education provision is good but the quality of Work Based Learning provided by the College is inadequate. It was noted that there had been a preliminary discussion of the Report at the last meeting of the Governing Body on 6 March 2013. It was also noted that the Principal had submitted a complaint regarding the Inspection to ETI as part of its complaints' procedure.

The Principal at the outset stated that he would be interested in comments on the Report particularly from Members coming with a fresh perspective on its contents.

Members made a number of observations regarding the document:

- The Report was considered unbalanced and little effort had been made to address the aggregation of weightings attributed to FE and WBL. A query was raised as to whether some of the results had come as a surprise and what action was being taken to enhance performance. The Director of Curriculum stated that the collation and analysis of data in WBL had not been as effective as in FE and this had influenced the decision of the inspection team.
- The Report was heavily influenced by the WBL outcome although it represented only 7% of College business. The Director of Curriculum agreed that findings in respect of WBL had overshadowed the FE performance. While a reduced TfS provision would be preferable for improving the quality of WBL, if NRC were to contract unduly or disband its WBL provision it could disadvantage the community that the College serves.
- The Report was regarded as negative; good grades had been referred to with qualification whereas poor grades remained unqualified. This had resulted in an overall negative document.
- Reference was made to the need for the Governing Body to strengthen its scrutiny of WBL. The Chair of the Education Committee asserted that the Committee had been receiving regular reports and had been involved in detailed discussions regarding WBL; no evidence of this detailed scrutiny had been taken into account.
- ETI's adjustment of the Inspection model after each Inspection had ensured that benchmarking was meaningless.
- The Report highlighted instances of 'very good' and 'inadequate' leadership and management. A Governor questioned whether management was aware of these variations. It was noted that all instances of 'inadequate' management had occurred in one school, which no longer existed. Some time prior to the Inspection there had been a reorganisation and these areas had been allocated to another school with a different Head of School. The Director of Curriculum emphasised that everyone has a role to play in leadership and management down to Course Team level.
- No distinction has been drawn in the Report between ApprenticeshipsNI and Training for Success.

b) Professional And Technical Area Reports

The Committee gave consideration to the Professional and Technical Area Reports at Part 3 of the Inspection Report. It was noted that nine of the twelve areas inspected had received 'good' or 'very good' grades but 'satisfactory' had been given to ES and EI and 'inadequate' grades had been allocated to: Mechanical Engineering Services (plumbing); Trowel Occupations (brickwork); and Wood Occupations.

The Committee made a number of comments in relation to the Area Reports:

- It would be necessary in the reorganisation of WBL to ensure that the appropriate staff skills and capabilities were considered in the areas of underachievement.
- The Chair of the Governing Body should forward a note of congratulations to Heads of School in the Professional and Technical Areas, which had received 'good' and 'very good' grades, as a morale booster.
- A press release should be prepared to counteract any adverse publicity from the media regarding areas of underachievement. The Principal assured the Committee that an appropriate release had been prepared, which could be circulated to Members of the Committee.

c) Action Plans

It was noted that all members of the Governing Body had received copies of the Action Plans, which had been prepared for Whole College Issues and for the following areas deemed to be

satisfactory or inadequate by the Inspectorate: brickwork, electrical installation, plumbing and wood occupations and Essential Skills. Mrs Suzanne Kennedy, Head of Quality Improvement, provided a summary of progress to date to address the areas for improvement referred to in the Inspection Report and highlighted in the Action Plans (**see summary attached at Appendix 1**).

During subsequent discussion Members made reference to:

- Sharing Best Practice Conferences had been arranged for HE, FE, Training and ES with a view to enhancing the quality of learning. In response to a query it was noted that attendance had been very good and feedback very positive and that the College was addressing instances of non-attendance. An appraisal scheme for all support and curriculum staff and a classroom observation scheme had also been implemented to raise the quality of learning and teaching.
- Action was being taken to ascertain the views of staff, students and employers to increase the involvement of stakeholders.

The Committee agreed that the Action Plans should be approved.

16.8 Balanced Scorecard

The Director of Curriculum provided an update regarding the 'Student Experience' domain of the College's Balanced Scorecard. The Committee noted that:

- There is currently a shortfall of 73 FLUs with a predicted year-end shortfall of some 200 FLUs;
- Overall College retention rates are above target at 96%

16.9 Whole College Self Evaluation Review and Quality Improvement Plan

The Committee received a presentation from Mrs Kennedy regarding the Whole College Self Evaluation Review and Quality Improvement Plan. She explained that the Plan, which was partially complete, reflected the recommendations contained in the College Inspection Report.

She drew the Committee's attention to the following Key Actions: the implementation of rigorous performance management through the development of the curriculum strategy and the meticulous analysis and reporting of data; the enhancement of the quality of provision of learning by sharing best practice, improving the monitoring and tracking of achievement; and increasing the involvement of stakeholders such as staff, students and employers.

It was noted that reference is made in the Plan of the role of the Teaching and Learning Committee in the enhancement of the quality of teaching and learning. **It was agreed that a Report on the activities of the Teaching and Learning Committee should be submitted to the next meeting of the Education Committee.**

The Committee agreed that the document, when completed, should be circulated to Members for comment and forwarded to the Department to meet the 29 March 2013 deadline.

16.10 Any Other Notified Business

16.10.1 Training IQRS QI Plan

The Training IQRS QI Plan for the March 2013 submission was discussed. **It was agreed that the final draft document should be forwarded to members before Easter for comment and the final document submitted to DEL 15 April 2013.**

16.10.2 Presentation to Education Committee

It was agreed that there should be a presentation on Acumen at the next meeting if the Education Committee.

16.11 Next Meeting

The Chairperson reminded members that the next meeting of the Education Committee is scheduled for 5.30 pm on Tuesday 14 May 2013 at the Farm Lodge Ballymena Campus.

R Jay, Chair

J A Hunter, Secretary