

AQUINAS COLLEGE
TEACHING AND LEARNING COMMITTEE

Date: 10 February 2015
Time: 4.30pm
Venue: The College

GOVERNORS PRESENT

Ms H Delahan, Mr B Hickey, Mr A Martin, Cllr T McGee, Dr A Smith and Mr D Pearson.

Cllr T McGee in the Chair

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received and accepted from Fr P Munroe.

Governors noted that at the moment there were no Student Governors but at the Governing Body meeting on 10 March 2015 it was anticipated that new Student Governors would be in place.

2. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Governors and Staff were asked to declare any interest, which they may have in any of the items on the Agenda for this meeting. No interests were declared.

3. COMMITTEE MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 14 October 2014 copies of which had been circulated previously be approved and signed by the Chairperson as a correct record.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE COMMITTEE MINUTES

There were no matters arising that were not covered on the Agenda.

5. QUALITY REVIEW MEETINGS - UPDATE

Mr Pearson circulated a paper that gave details of the grading structure that the college had used when undertaking the quality review of departments. The college had used the Ofsted grading having a + or a – added to the grades. Governors noted that most of the departments were a grade 2. Column 3 in the paper covering achievement, retention, success and high grades showed the grading in relation to the sixth form college data.

A discussion took place on ALPS which is the main source for value added data and how this corresponded to the grading of a department. Mr Pearson advised Governors that if a department was grade 3 or -3 the college would undertake an audit to see what was going on in that department. Last year the Psychology department had an audit and this year Biology has had an audit. There had been a gradual downward slide in the Psychology department results but it had now moved in a positive direction, it was too early to comment on the Biology department but more information would be available at the next meeting.

The audit has the potential to be perceived as something top heavy that is being imposed on a department but it has the benefit of being analysed at a distance. The Biology department has received the scrutiny openly and co-operated fully with the process. The need for a collaborative approach is key to successful outcomes.

Mr Hickey asked if there was a set format for the reviews. Mr Pearson advised Governors that there was a skeleton framework that included lesson observation, peer observation and a look at other departments but there was not a one size fits all.

Mr Pearson was asked about the specific issues in Psychology, he mentioned one factor was that the department had changed exam board. He added that results varied depending on the examination board and suggested that the department had not looked closely enough at what the board were requiring. Mr Pearson added that with the move to linear A levels all boards should be the same. Cllr McGee felt that a change of board may focus the attention. Mr Hickey asked if there was a problem with a particular examining board. Mr Pearson indicated that there had been problems with AQA.

Cllr McGee referred to his discussion with Ofsted when the college was last inspected. He had stated that the college faced many challenges but was moving at a pace that suited the college. This had been accepted by the lead inspector on Governance.

Mr Pearson advised Governors that in the last few weeks 80 lesson observations had been undertaken by staff within the college and staff from other sixth form colleges. The results were as follows:

Outstanding	28	35%
Good	44	55%.
Requires Improvement	7	8.75%
Inadequate	1	1.25%

Dr Smith suggested that it may be better to record the findings as good, requires improvement etc rather than as a grade and that the observation needs to take account of teaching, learning and assessment. There is a need to spend more time on how students learn. It was acknowledged that observation puts pressure on teachers and that a more informal approach may lead to a change in culture.

Mr Pearson advised Governors that the college has a team of Professional Standards Mentors to help staff so that they feel less pressure. Any teacher that has a grade of Requires Improvement or Inadequate will see a Professional Standards Mentor. Ms Delehan felt that the quality of the feedback was important and that staff within a department can help. Mr Pearson added that Heads of Departments are encouraged to take a walk through the department.

Cllr McGee added that in gearing up for another inspection in 18 months time the college has to move forward and demonstrate that support is being provided.

6. CURRICULUM ISSUES

Mr Pearson advised Governors that in the future some A levels will not exist but this should not affect the college. There are not many changes for next year but the college may introduce a BTEC in Dance from September 2015.

Mr Pearson circulated a paper that showed the following:

- Average Point Score per A Level Entry
- Average Point Score per A Level Student
- Value added score A level progress
- Average Point Score academic entry
- Average Point Score per Academic Student
- Average Point Score per Vocational Entry
- Average Point Score per Vocational Entry (expressed as a grade)

Average Point Score per Vocational Student
Value added Vocational Progress.

The paper also showed for comparison the information for 6 other sixth form colleges who are in the consortium.

A discussion took place on the various points score and particular reference was made to the average point score per vocational student for Holy Cross. Cllr McGee advised Governors that Holy Cross do not have many non vocational subjects.

Mr Pearson advised Governors that the college was moving towards 20% BTEC subjects, Performing Arts and Sport have been offering BTEC for some time. Ms Delahan asked what the characteristics of a BTEC were. Mr Pearson replied by saying that the staff can control deadlines, push students more and students can submit re-drafts of their work. Dr Smith felt that in addition to good teaching students need to know how to pass examinations.

7. LINEARITY 2015 ONWARDS

Mr Pearson circulated two papers concerning the reform of A and AS levels. The first paper indicated the timescale for each subject to move to linear examinations and a letter that had been sent to departments seeking their views on how things might change from September 2015. The second paper was a document issued by ASCL.

Mr Pearson advised Governors that mathematics and further mathematics would now move to become a linear A level in September 2017. The letter to staff proposed 4 options from September 2015 as follows:

- i) To teach all classes as a 2 year linear course
- ii) As above but to identify students in danger of failing by January of their first year to be entered for AS to gauge their progress and potential to continue.
- iii) To teach all classes to be examined in the AS at the end of year1 and the full A level at the end of year2. Allowing a drop out point.
- iv) Where subject size allows, to have the majority of classes as option) and one or two classes as option iii)

Most departments voted for option iii) which is basically what is currently happening, with English taking option i).

Cllr McGee asked if a student is taking 3 A levels but drops 1 how is the student protected. Mr Pearson replied by saying currently a student takes 4 and drops 1 this still leaves 3. The college will probably still offer AS across the board.

Mr Pearson advised Governors that there would be no more money for examinations but it anticipated that the price for sitting a linear A level will increase. This is at a time when the college will have to make big savings. By 2016 there will be 25 linear A levels with more still to convert in 2017.

Mr Pearson was thanked for his informative presentations.

8. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

16 June 2015 at 4.30pm

Signed _____
Chairperson

Date _____