

Present: Prof Mary Dunning (Committee Chair)
Mr David Bavaird, Governor Norham
Mr Jim Coltman, Governor John Spence
Mr Fran Done, Governor Marden
Mr Ian Gordon, Governor John Spence
Mr David Baldwin, Executive Headteacher Norham
Mrs Joan Bloomfield, Interim Headteacher, Marden
Mr Jim Stephenson, Headteacher John Spence
Mr Jon Vincent, Principal TyneMet
Mr Tim Downing, Associate Member
Ms Erin Hollinshead, Associate Member
Mr Peter Smith, Associate Member

In attendance: Mrs Rosamund Moore, Company Secretary
Mrs Ann-Marie Crozier, Deputy Principal: Finance & Corporate Development
Mrs Audrey Kingham, Deputy Principal: Curriculum & Business Development
Mr Lee Patterson, Head of Queen Alexandra Sixth Form College
Mr Jean-Luke Minchella, QA Sixth Form Student

[The meeting started at 5.30 pm]

ACTION

At the start of the meeting, Committee Chair Professor Dunning welcomed to the Committee Mrs Joan Bloomfield, Interim Headteacher of Marden High School.

Prof Dunning indicated that two items of Any Other Business would be raised at this evening's meeting, the first being the press release announcing the development of a strategic partnership between TyneMet and South Tyneside Colleges and the second being about Area-based Reviews which the government had instigated.

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Mrs Beverley Atkinson, Mrs Helen Bower, Ms Lydia Wysocki and Mr Steve Watts.

2. Declarations of interest and possible resolutions

None.

3. Presentation

Purple Milk

QASFC student Jean-Luke Minchella provided background information about the inception, naming and planning of the QA Sixth Form newspaper, saying that he and fellow student, Ngoni Matsvimbo, had turned the newspaper into a reality this year. There had been a great response from QASFC students who had written articles on things about which they were passionate. Graphic Arts students had also contributed with examples of their artwork. He thanked Sociology teacher Mr David Kendrick and Mr Patterson for their support.

With more articles ready for publication, Mr Minchella hoped that the cost of producing the next issue would be covered through advertising. Mr Patterson confirmed that the aim was for the newspaper to be self-financing at a cost of circa £600 per issue. Mr Bavaird stated that he would approach some businesses in North Shields and also suggested that some of the College's main suppliers

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might be willing to support the newspaper. Mr Minchella indicated that the newspaper had been distributed to the QA partner schools and had been well-received at open events. The Committee was impressed with this student initiative and encouraged them to produce a second issue.

Value Added at QASFC

Mr Patterson provided a presentation to the Committee on Value Added with respect to QASFC students, explaining that the “distance travelled” by each student from the point of entry to the QA Sixth Form was measured and tracked via the nationally used software, Ready Reckoner. The aim was for each student to at least achieve their estimated grades, but an aspirational grade for each subject was set one level above estimated attainment to provide stretch and challenge to the students. Each student’s progress was closely monitored throughout the year through the College’s five-and-one-model as well as the mock exam results. Using these and a variety of other means, Students who were assessed as falling below their expectations were closely supported.

In response to Committee members’ questions, Mr Patterson explained that staff were given guidance on how to ensure that data tracking was accurate and that most teachers were qualified and working with exam bodies. Teaching staff were held accountable for the distance travelled by their students and this formed part of the in-house staff appraisal process.

Prof Dunning asked Committee members either to return the Value Added Tracking paperwork which had been tabled after the meeting, or to ensure it was destroyed.

All

Responding to further questions by Committee members, Mr Patterson reported that 2014/15 A2 Level had a negative residual of -0.213 which was on a par with the borough. The AS residual was -0.16 which was the best it had ever been. Mr Patterson indicated that students with a GCSE score of 40 were counselled to take three rather than four A Levels to give them the greatest chance of success.

Discussion followed about the Value Added graphs for AS and A2 Level. A question was asked about where the accountability lay, including the extent to which the QASFC Committee was accountable, given that a number of subjects showed a negative residual Value Added. Further, clarification was sought about whether the Committee needed a greater understanding of the difference between AS and A2 Level. Mr Patterson confirmed that the College’s Value Added performance at A2 was the best in the region amongst FE colleges.

Prof Dunning reminded those present that the Committee had requested a better understanding of Value Added and the process followed by the College. This was a development session for Committee members which would help them ask more insightful questions in future.

Mrs Crozier observed that the cross-college quality review processes and Key Performance Indicator information were not presented to the Committee, but that this Committee could perhaps receive a fuller report on QASFC performance. Committee members felt that this would be helpful so that they could better understand trends and context. From a QA partner schools’ perspective, this would help them prepare pupils for the transition to the QA Sixth Form and the schools might also be able to identify areas of good practice which could be shared with the College.

On behalf of the Committee, Prof Dunning asked the Executive Team to consider how reporting to the Committee could usefully be amended to take on board the above discussions.

JV / AMC
/ AK

Student Council:

Miss Hollinshead and Mr Minchella presented key results from a student questionnaire which the Student Council had designed and distributed to fellow students. The survey had sought student views on such things as support in lessons, confidence in asking questions in class, how well students understood lesson content, value of tutor feedback, preparation for exams, and satisfaction with the library. Views on how things could be improved in general had also been sought. As shown in the presentation, student views about their experience at QA Sixth Form College were very positive. The Chair and Vice of Governors, who had attended the recent QA Student Council meeting, had suggested that a follow-up survey might be helpful. The students confirmed, in response to questions, that the student body had received the results of the survey.

On behalf of the Committee, Prof Dunning thanked the two students for their interesting and valuable input into the meeting and *Mr Minchella left the meeting at 6.20 pm.*

4 Report from Head of Sixth Form

Mr Patterson presented his report which provided a summary of Queen Alexandra Sixth Form's overall performance and development since the last meeting in November. This included a summary of the partnership work undertaken between the QA Sixth Form and John Spence, Marden and Norham High Schools.

Mr Patterson provided information about in-year performance, particularly related to retention, attendance, mock examination results showing Value Added, and focussed actions to support staff and students. Feedback from students indicated that the mock exams had given them a better understanding of how to improve their performance. The results of the mock exams had also been discussed with parents at a recent parents' evening and revision sessions were planned over the Easter holidays.

In response to a question about attendance, Mrs Kingham commented that attendance at the QA Sixth Form was comparable with other FE colleges and marginally below that of sixth form colleges.

Mr Patterson gave a breakdown of this year's UCAS applications, 87 in total. Seven students had applied to Oxbridge and two had conditional offers from Jesus College Cambridge. The remaining five Oxbridge applicants had received offers from Russell Group universities. A discussion followed about recent media coverage on the increasing number of unconditional offers being made by some universities.

The report outlined key outcomes of the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Review for the QA Sixth Form. Mr Patterson commented that today's CPD session had focussed on preparation for exams.

Regarding reference to Learning Walks, it was explained that this was a programme for TyneMet Governors. QA partner Headeachers had visited the Sixth Form, but it was agreed that a Learning Walk at the QA Sixth Form could be arranged for QA Committee members.

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In response to a Committee member's question about graded lesson observations, it was confirmed that the same Ofsted inspection framework now applied to both colleges and schools. While Ofsted no longer carried out graded lesson observations, the College had decided to continue with these. Nevertheless, other types of evidence were used to triangulate teacher performance to gain a reliable view of performance over a longer period. Ms

Hollinshead commented that, in her view, teachers' lessons were often better when an inspector was not present. Discussion followed about how the Committee could assess the quality of teaching, learning and assessment at the QA Sixth Form, whether the quality was improving, and what the Committee's role was in this respect. Lesson observations provided a snapshot that needed to be viewed as part of a range of College processes to support improvement which Mrs Kingham outlined for the Committee. Mrs Crozier suggested that it might be helpful to share the QA Sixth Form's Self-Assessment Report with the Committee to support understanding of performance, trends and context. Prof Dunning requested a short presentation on the College's quality review process for the next meeting.

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Mr Vincent felt that the Committee was operating in accordance with its terms of reference, but that it might be timely to review these and come back to the Committee with possible revisions and a programme of work. At the same time Prof Dunning indicated that it would be important not to blur the accountability for performance which ultimately rested with the TyneMet Corporation Board.

JV

Continuing with his report, Mr Patterson highlighted the current number of applications to the Sixth Form and outlined the work underway to attract students to the College. Mr Patterson wished to place on record his thanks to the current QASFC students who attended open events at the College and the schools and the Committee agreed that the students were superb ambassadors for the College.

With respect to the Partnership Development Group, Mr Patterson provided information about joint staffing regarding Modern Foreign Languages, Maths and Science links with Marden High School, a variety of events with year 10 and 11 pupils and displays and exhibits for British Science Week which was currently underway.

Events related to the Sixth Form were highlighted, including links with a school in Copenhagen and the establishment of WAMEdu in College. In response to a Committee member's question, it was explained that WAMEdu was an internal social media site, similar to Facebook, but used solely by the College's staff and students in relation to College work and activities. It had been well received by staff and students alike.

One Committee member commented very positively on the work of QA Creative Studios with staff and students of Christ Church Junior School to develop digital artwork for the North Shields Trail, due to open on 22 March, saying that it was a great example of how the College supported its local community.

On behalf of the Committee, Prof Dunning thanked Mr Patterson for his report as Head of the QA Sixth Form.

5. Minutes and Matters Arising of the Meeting of 3 November 2015

The minutes were approved as a true record and duly signed by the Committee Chair.

Under Matters Arising, item 5, Report from Head of Sixth Form, Mr Vincent highlighted the variety of ways in which the College was communicating information to potential students about Modern Foreign Languages. Mr Baldwin thanked Mr Vincent for the clarification which he found helpful.

Under Matters Arising, item 8, Partnership Engagement, Prof Dunning provided clarification regarding the points raised at the last meeting about the Statement of

Collaboration: At the last Committee meeting, it had been proposed that, for practical reasons, the QA Executive Management Committee would not meet while there were Headteacher vacancies at two of the QA Sixth Form partner schools. In advance of the last QASFC Committee meeting, the substantive and interim Headteachers had indicated they were happy with this proposal.

During this period, the Head of the QA Sixth Form, Mr Lee Patterson, has been meeting the Headteachers and other school contacts via the Partnership Development Group.

It was originally thought that this might need a change to the Statement of Collaboration, but as this was intended to be a temporary measure only, the endorsement of the Boards of the four partners would suffice.

The Company Secretary had emailed the minutes to the Clerks of all three QA Sixth Form partner school governing bodies, as requested. The matter had been raised at the Board meetings of all three schools and the proposal endorsed. TyneMet's Board had also endorsed the course of action.

Mr Vincent commented that the College was trying to accommodate an unusual situation in the schools. This matter would be revisited at the end of the year to see if it would be helpful to reinstate the QA Executive Management Committee or whether the current, interim measures were deemed to be sensible in the long term. This could be reviewed in conjunction with the terms of reference.

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All matters had been, or were being, taken forward as agreed.

9. Any Other Business

Two inter-related points of *Any Other Business* were raised.

Mr Vincent provided details about the Area-based Review process which the government had instigated for General Further Education (GFE) colleges and Sixth Form colleges. He commented that the reviews did not cover all post-16 or adult provision. TyneMet College would be in Wave 3 of 5 which would commence in April and cover colleges located in Tyne & Wear, Northumberland and Durham (the NELEP sub-region). Neither Waves 1 nor 2 had reached their conclusion as yet and the original timescale of around four months was proving to be unrealistic, given the number of members of each Steering Group and the inevitable complexities of reaching conclusions with so many people round the table. Any recommendations were non-binding as GFE and Sixth Form Colleges were independent corporations and their Boards had sovereignty over such decision-making unless they were failing and required intervention by the Secretary of State. None of the ten colleges in Wave 3 were failing. Generally, the FE Commissioner was chairing the reviews, although it was noted that Dr Gill Alexander was now leading the review in Tees Valley. In our region, the North East Combined Authority and the NELEP, who were part of the Steering Group, had requested a delay to the Area Review, but this had not been accepted.

The FE Commissioner had been encouraging colleges to seek their own potential solutions which would feed into the Area Review process. As a result, the Boards of TyneMet and South Tyneside College had agreed to explore the development of a strategic partnership (as per the press release which was circulated to the Committee). Assurance was given that the two colleges were not in merger discussions despite some misreporting in the press recently. Mr Vincent explained that discussions were at an early stage. The two colleges had signed an exclusivity and confidentiality agreement which was valid until the summer, but every effort would be made to be as transparent as possible with stakeholders.

It was not envisaged that front line curriculum departments would be disbanded and TyneMet remained fully committed to QA Sixth Form College. Although Sixth Form Colleges were being encouraged by the government to become Academies, the QA Sixth Form College was legally part of TyneMet College and this was not an option. One Committee member felt the message - especially that TyneMet and South Tyneside Colleges were not merging - needed to be reinforced in the community. Prof Dunning thought it might be worth TyneMet's Chair of Governors coming to the QASFC Committee meeting at some stage.

In response to a comment by a Committee member about the possible threat of a takeover by a larger college, Mr Vincent indicated that this could potentially create a monopoly which would be contrary to fair competition legislation, although there was limited case law on this matter. He again provided assurance that the College's aim, and the Governors' responsibility as Charity Trustees, was to provide the best education to its local community within a resilient organisation.

10. Any items to be designated as non-confidential or no longer exempted following this meeting and conversely any items to be designated as exempted/confidential

None.

Next meeting: Tuesday, 21 June 2016, 5:30pm

The meeting closed at 7.20 pm.