



## **Sixth Form College Commissioner Assessment Report: Summary and Recommendations - Prior Pursglove College**

### **Senior Leadership Team**

Changes have been made to the responsibilities of senior leadership team members with the Principal leading on teaching and learning having moved this responsibility from the Vice Principal who now has a focus on quality and data systems and on producing and monitoring delivery of the Post Inspection Action Plan (PIAP). At the time of our visit the senior leadership team had gaps in expertise and capability due to the absence of the Finance Director and HR Officer both due to sickness. This places further pressure on the Principal and other senior leadership team members.

In response to the challenges facing the college, the Principal has changed her leadership style to be more directive with an emphasis on direct tracking of individual staff and student performance. The Principal has also made clear the imperative to all staff that no student should fail and that more students should get high grades. There is a clear vision for all staff that all students must pass and meet their target grades.

### **Organisational structures**

Changes have been made to the structure of the college with strong emphasis placed on the faculty structure as a means to deliver closer tracking of student and teacher performance and rapid intervention where students are under-achieving in-year. This structure has seen a greater focus placed on teacher performance monitoring resulting in capability action in respect of poor performing teachers, some of whom have already left the college.

### **Governing body changes**

Since the exam results in 2013 the governing body has been actively recruiting additional members with a particular focus on enhancing knowledge and expertise in teaching, learning and assessment, in order to increase its ability to challenge and support the senior leadership team. There has also been a change in focus of the governing body with scrutiny of teaching and learning at every governing body meeting. The frequency of governing body meetings has also increased; meetings are now scheduled monthly.

The governing body is also broadening members' exposure to the educational challenges facing the college. A system of 'linked governors' has been initiated forging direct links between faculties and individual governors which is making them more visible to college staff and giving them a greater insight into the operation of the college.

Further work is required to ensure that the governing body carries out effective regular, formal reviews of key postholders' performance; reviews its own performance, skills and knowledge; and that there is a clear forward plan for renewing membership and for member training.

## Individual learner focus

There has been a tightening of entry criteria and initial assessment processes in 2013/14 to ensure that students are better matched to appropriate courses. New basic skills assessments have been introduced in 2013/14 and are being used to identify additional literacy and numeracy support required for students. More emphasis is being placed on the use of robust systems for assessing, tracking and challenging student progress.

This is also being underpinned by greater rigour in use of in year data (KAGs and in year examinations) to monitor performance so as to then provide one to one support for students who are not achieving predicted grades or are at risk of failing. Managers are personally taking action to raise expectations of student punctuality and attendance as well as challenging students to use more of their college time for effective study including in study periods and lunch breaks. Students now have online access to their own data to encourage personal tracking of progress.

These changes are showing evidence of impact through improved retention and attendance.

## Performance management

In recognition of the need to challenge poor teaching the college has implemented strong performance management for teachers although there is a need, in the absence of the HR Officer, to ensure support is available for faculty managers and Assistant Principals to manage both the process and impact. Redundancy and capability processes have been strengthened to enable the process to be more effectively managed. Interviews suggested performance management of college managers could be more effectively embedded.

## Post Inspection Action Plan

The PIAP as drafted at the time of our visit listed most of the actions underway but should also reflect the range of actions required to enable the governing body to play a fully effective role in supporting and sustaining recovery. The format and content of the PIAP required considerable amendment to enable it to be used to monitor progress against the wide range of actions required to deliver improvement. In particular, the plan needs to consider risks both to the delivery of planned actions and to them having the intended impact once delivered, and consider counter-measures and contingencies. The use of risk management processes could be utilised college wide to underpin effective tracking of progress and strategic planning.

## Budget

The college is facing a budget deficit in 2014/15 and a potential follow on deficit for 2015/16 and will need to develop a robust action plan to address this issue based on realistic projections of student numbers. This may need to consider shared services with other institutions and the sustainability of curriculum areas.

**Peter Mucklow**

**National Director for Young People**

**Education Funding Agency**

**March 2014**

## Recommendations

- a) the Governing Body should carry out regular, formal reviews of their performance and their capacity in terms of skills and knowledge. They should establish their own forward plan on membership replacement and training.
- b) the Governing Body should continue to secure and exploit external sources of advice from colleges that have attained excellence and in particular from other colleges that have successfully addressed inadequate ratings by Ofsted. This should include action to identify an experienced current or ex chair of governors from a SFC or a general FE college who can provide mentor support to the chair of governors.
- c) the Governing Body should continue to explore and exploit sources of good practice and benchmarking across the sector and particularly from SFCs.
- d) the Governing Body should strengthen the means by which they challenge and hold the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) to account for performance. This should include further work to sharpen targets, measures - especially forward measures - and indicators of college performance.
- e) the Governing Body should strengthen the process of regular performance appraisals of SLT members.
- f) the Principal should review and strengthen the structure and responsibilities of the Senior Leadership Team to strengthen the second tier support to her on curriculum and standards and finance.
- g) the Principal should move urgently to strengthen expert support for the HR officer role and to agree the finance shared services arrangements with another local provider.
- h) the governing body and SLT should carry out work as soon as possible to develop and improve the PIAP. This should include work to establish risk assessments and RAG ratings against the key actions and work across all areas to sharpen actions, milestones and success measures. A shorter summary version for staff to aid communication, understanding and ownership across the college should be produced.
- i) the governing body and SLT should establish and apply college wide risk assessment and risk management processes.
- j) the governing body and SLT should ensure that they review forecast income in light of activity and realistic projections of student recruitment and that they have robust plans for 2015-16 and beyond should they need to secure any further savings in expenditure.
- k) the EFA should run case conferences with representatives from SLT and governors, Ofsted, Skills Funding Agency and other relevant stakeholders to monitor progress against the PIAP. These meetings will be run up to the re-inspection by Ofsted (likely to be before 2015).
- l) the EFA should attend meetings of the Governing Body with observer status. This will be reviewed quarterly according to an assessment of progress made by the college.
- m) there should be no change, at this stage, to the College's sponsorship role with Freebrough Academy but this should be reviewed dependent on improvement at the college and through the case conferences.

© Crown copyright May 2014