



Ninestiles Academy Trust
Progress and Standards Panel
Ninestiles Academy and The Sixth Form College, Solihull
Monday 19th March 2018 14.00 – 16.00
Trust Boardroom – Ninestiles, An Academy

In attendance

Catherine Anwar	CA	Chief Executive Officer
Gaetano Ferrante	GF	School Improvement Director
James Power	JP	Principal, Ninestiles
Martin Sullivan	MS	Principal, 6th Form College, Solihull
Karen Crowston	KC	Vice Chair, Board of Trustees
Jazz Edwards	JE	Vice Chair, Ninestiles & 6th Form Academy Council
Jade Beetison	JB	Assistant Principal, Ninestiles
Janice Hamilton	JH	Vice Principal, 6th Form College, Solihull
Jamie Staddon	JS	Assistant Principal, 6th Form College, Solihull
Sonia Wood	SW	Interim Vice Principal, 6th Form College, Solihull

CA welcomed the panel to the second Progress and Standards panel of the academic year. CA noted that the focus of this meeting was to look at Year 11 and Year 13 data from the school and college respectively.

CA thanked KC for attending on behalf of the Trustees and thanked JE for attending in her capacity as Vice Chair of the Academy Council in Vrigu Dey's absence.

CA invited the 6th form College leadership to present their data and noted that the panel will pose questions throughout where appropriate.

The Sixth Form College, Solihull

MS explained that two sets of data had been circulated, one set based on results of mock exams that took place in January and one of set of data which shows Value Added data.

CA asked for clarification as to whether Value Added is measured against the target set for students based on their GCSE results. JS clarified that it was measured against students' minimum expected grade. Value added is the factor which is prominent in performance league tables.

MS continued to explain that from the sets of data, and following the college's Ofsted Inspection in February, they have rapidly put actions in place to raise outcomes. The last period of the day has been altered to allowed for 30 minutes of targeted interventions to take place for students. This is being rolled out and will be fully in place for all by the 16th April. MS noted that this change will be built in from the beginning of every academic year going forward. MS explained that the interventions vary in scope from large subjects to small subjects, depending on the situation.

CA asked for clarification as to whether targets are set for students from when they arrive at college and also questioned whether these are numerical score targets or whether the students receive grade targets. JS noted that the actual overall grade is static and the point score is a number. CA questioned whether is the student receives their grades, are they aware as to whether it is a high, middle or low grade. JS explained that minimum expected grades given to students are normally split grades, for example A/B or B/C.

CA asked whether if all students meet their targets, their Value added score would be zero and no better than other colleges. MS explained that due to the nature of the cohort (with regard to aspects such as ethnicity and disadvantaged), they need to aim for a positive value added to be in line with the national figures.

CA noted that the current Value added is -0.6 so it seems there is a long way to progress. MS agreed but noted that the subject areas tend to fall into two categories, those that have been through the first phase of change and have marked A level papers to refer to, and those that don't. MS felt that those subjects who are aware of the examiners and the level of scrutiny required have posted lower scores to encompass this.

KC questioned what has been actioned by the college to get the message across to students that these changes have happened. MS noted that the message has been given clearly to students. Those teaching the subjects that have gone through phase 1 have made subjects teachers who have not, aware of this issue as well.

CA asked whether MS felt the teachers were erring on the side of caution with the predicted grades and mock scores. MS agreed that in some cases they are.

KC noted that students are doing marked assignments, and questioned what the process is for when a student receives a score for their marked assignment that is lower than their minimum expected grade. MS explained that they have a number of processes which vary from rewriting questions or giving out example answers which vary in quality to assess. JS noted that he felt there is an inconsistent approach across the subject teams in their approaches to teaching and learning.

GF asked whether the team have confidence in certain subjects. JS noted that he had confidence in the English department as they are giving clear, formative feedback which is linked to next steps and actions to move the students forward. English have seen how the papers are assessed in Year 1. JS noted that the leadership team are building in more frequent meetings with curriculum leaders as a group so they can share good practice and work towards consistency for the students.

GF asked whether there are subjects that are cause for concern. JS noted that Business and Law were a concern as they are inconsistent in their approaches.

CA asked whether the Senior team had sought any external advice following the Ofsted inspection. JS explained that Colchester 6th form college have visited the college and they have made connections with a college in Brighton. Collaborative work is taking place to benefit from these visits. SW noted that the Chief Examiner for Art is coming in to college to spend a day looking at grade boundaries and Shaun Dillon will be returning to look at science and providing learning walk training.

CA asked how the staff are responding to these measure being put in place, particularly following the Ofsted inspection outcome. MS noted that the majority of staff are responsive to the changes. There are some however that do not feel they should be affected by the changes as they were not observed by Ofsted. MS explained he is working to get the message across that the whole college is on this improvement journey together and that the mock results show that all teaching areas need to improve.

CA noted that reflections from the Curriculum leaders have been provided and questioned whether the Senior Leadership Team are moderating these reflections as they were variable in quality and in how seriously they appeared to take the evaluation. In addition, there is a

lack of evidence referred to. CA noted that it would be useful if they were to see what a useful, productive reflection was and work on theirs accordingly.

MS agreed and noted that the management layer below Assistant Principal level needed to be looked at closely and curriculum leaders do require development in their reflections. JS agreed and noted that he planned to do it altogether with curriculum leaders and create a forum for development, but also for expectations to be set. MS noted that he felt most MLs could be developed to reflect and review effectively and those that cannot will be put on the PIP route (Professional Improvement Plan). CA suggested that staff should be made aware that their reflections are shown to senior leaders and this panel and it might act as a motivator. MS noted that they are carrying out health checks for every member of staff, so again this will highlight the issues.

GF asked what support is being provided for those students with the E to U grade. MS explained that Assistant Principals have met with all students individually that are triple or double U grades and programmes have been put in place to ensure that the students leave the college with the best possible outcome. CA questioned whether the impact of these programmes is visible. MS noted that these have been in place for two weeks but will be monitored and adjustments made if necessary. MS explained that parents of students are also being contacted so they are aware of the situations.

KC questioned whether there are any commonalities across this group of students. MS explained that they are not large group of students but many have background stories which have put limitations on their education. MS explained that the college are doing everything they can to support these students and allowing them to have the space to work in college.

CA asked which of the underperforming groups will most negatively affect their Value Added score. MS explained it would be the E – U students as for every student that receives a U grade, they need two students with a positive Value added score to balance it out.

GF asked what is being doing to ensure the higher achievers reach their potential. MS noted that they are an interesting group as many have received unconditional offers from the University of Birmingham. This can lead to students getting complacent. CA asked what other colleges do in these situations. MS noted that it is tricky to motivate students and other colleges in the area do have higher achieving students so do not have it as an issue. CA suggested bringing an element of competition into play and offering prizes to students who achieve the highest grade.

CA noted that attendance is currently an issue, particularly in Politics and Law. CA questioned what is being done to address this. MS noted that the college average is in line with the national average for the sector and their data does vary across subjects. They have put in place a system where if students do not attend lessons, parents are notified on that day. MS explained that this was in its early stages but it was having a positive effect. JS explained that most subject areas are in line with national average attendance data. CA asked if in future, a national column could be added in alongside the college's data to allow for comparison. CA also asked that the attendance of groups of students could be analysed to cross-reference with their achievement. KC asked whether there are any consequences for those students with low attendance. MS explained that they celebrate 100% attendance for those students who achieve it. For those with low attendance, they are firstly met with by their academic coach, or subject teacher (if it is subject specific). These meetings are in place to ascertain and alleviate any reasons for the low attendance. If it does not improve, then the student is put on a 'behavioural contract' which if not followed, would eventually lead to a disciplinary panel for exclusion.

JH raised the issue of long term absence of students with mental health issues and staff have a fear of pushing students too far, as there is a fine line to tread. MS explained that 17 year olds do not qualify for either child services or adult services support so there is a gap in external support available.

GF asked for the leadership team to provide some details as to what actions have been taken to address the issue with Law. MS explained they are faced with a situation where they have a lack of proficient teaching and they need to do something creative to address the students with the lower outcomes. CA suggested that MS use the stronger teacher to lead on masterclasses for students that are at risk. MS agreed to look at this option. JH noted that they were looking to a colleague from The Law Society to help out where possible, and that the resources the current teachers have inherited are fit for purpose. It is an issue around delivery.

GF questioned whether they need to rethink when the data drops occur throughout the A Level process so they can have maximum impact. MS explained that going forward they will be doing 6 data collections in Year 1 and 4 in Year 2. CA noted that it is not always necessary to get data from all subjects at all times, so this could be reviewed.

CA asked if the panel had any further questions. They did not. CA thanked MS and the college leadership for their input and their hard work so far.

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CA invited JP to present his data and noted that the panel may pose questions throughout where appropriate.

JP began by noting that the Year 10 data seems bizarre in places as areas as those students who they would expect to have made the most progress have not. CA noted that she felt that this may be because this particular year group were not subject to rigorous assessment the previous year, so the picture may be variable. CA noted that this was the case across the Trust. JP agreed and noted that this year group will be doing PPEs following the Easter break. Following this, interventions will be tailored to those that require them.

Referring to the Year 11 data, JP noted that he was disappointed and it has raised questions for him across the departments. Maths and English results have gone up on average, however the sciences, geography, business and IT have decreased in terms of attainment. JP noted that subject leaders have carried out external moderations which has perhaps knocked their confidence and they are now erring on the side of caution.

MS asked whether they have been able to learn lessons from the new English and Maths GCSEs that were brought in last year. JP explained that his Head of English has got the subject leads together to share lessons learnt. He noted this may have made them more nervous in making their teacher assessments.

JP noted that the PPE exams have worried teaching staff due to the level of questioning and the fact it is more precise and in depth. CA questioned whether this issue has been fed through to the Assistant Principal with responsibility for CPD and Academic Language. This could be addressed across the whole school this way.

JB explained that subject leaders are meeting fortnightly and a 'prepare to perform' campaign is being rolled out to the teachers and students. They are following a specific action plan to cover all areas prior to the exam period.

JP noted they are doing an additional data collection on the 23rd April which will be based on teachers' professional judgements.

CA questioned whether subject leaders are aware of the key student groups and individual students that are not on track. CA noted that at Lyndon, they are using Venn diagrams across the school to identify those students and then map interventions accordingly.

JP explain that they were using strategies from PIXL and a BEP funded RADY project. JP noted that the school had invested in these projects before but had perhaps not made the best use of the resources.

CA suggested, given that almost 50% of the Yr 11 cohort are identified as high ability, the method of setting half of the cohort as 'top set' to raise motivation for the students.

JB explained that parents of Year 11 students were being invited in to school as a collective, to go through how to support them at home. Students and parents will be given a revision pack for every subject. SW questioned whether they thought attendance would be strong at such an event. JB noted that they are holding the event twice, once in the daytime and once in the evening to capture all parents. Phone calls and letters will be sent home to those who do not attend.

CA asked what further actions they are taking in order to raise outcomes. JP noted that his data manager was working on high quality data overviews which were much more visually helpful. Teachers will be able to use these to target the right students.

JP noted that he had observed that some staff members were reluctant to teach up to a grade 9 level and were lacking in confidence. He does not think it is due to intellectual capacity. MS suggested that staff from Ninestiles were welcome to attend any lessons in their subject areas at the college to see it taught at A level and the reverse could happen, where Maths College teachers could come into Ninestiles to demonstrate the higher level teaching and learning. JP agreed that this would be a useful exercise.

JP noted that he was losing a number of key staff as they move into the summer term, particularly in geography and he will be left with gaps in maths after Easter. JP explained they would be compacting groups and redistributing staff to counteract this.

KC asked whether there was a high enough level of questioning aimed at teachers from their leaders, to ensure that the strategies put in place were having an impact. JS noted that PIXL refers to a flight path of students going from a grade 4 to an 8 which is a simple tool to gauge the level students are working at. JP noted that teachers are responding better to questioning and the use of this flight path has helped this.

CA questioned whether teachers are clear in every cohort as to what the makeup of the year group is. JP felt that they were aware of their class makeup, but perhaps not had looked wider than this. CA noted that it is a good message to put across that everyone is responsible for every student. Venn diagrams can be a visual manifestation of the cohort for staff to clearly see and not be able to avoid the facts.

JP noted that they are relaunching standards, expectations and behaviours with the idea that every staff in the building is responsible, not just the teaching staff. KC asked when this would be launched. JB explained that this was relaunched last week. JP added that he addressed standards earlier in the year with staff, but on reflection it was not as explicit as it could have been.

CA asked whether the panel had any further questions.

GF asked what action was being taken in Maths and English to shift the outcomes upwards. JB explained that she has recently met with the Year 11 achievement leader, the Head of English and the Head of Maths. In this meeting they have identified the groups that need targeting and tailored the support by what level is required. JB explained that a small group of students have attended a PIXL Strive for Five conference also.

CA asked whether the team were confident that the Maths and English outcomes would be more positive this year. JP noted he was confident.

CA questioned what was happening in science, due to the low data scores. JP noted that again, he felt teachers were erring on the side of caution due to the changing nature of the GCSE and the fact that controlled assessment was no longer an element. CA advised that time and emphasis needs to be put on changing pedagogy to address the new linear approach of exams. There is a need to demonstrate a strategy to student on how to perform. CA noted that many teachers today would not themselves have completed linear courses with final exams like the new GCSEs before. This needs to be addressed with them, so they are able to confidently prepare students to perform well.

GF expressed that he was concerned about some key option subjects after looking at the data, for example Spanish. JP explained he has had a large staff turnover in these subject areas and changes in leadership which he feels would have affected the outcomes. JP noted that new leaders in place are working effectively and being supported well. JP explained that Jenny Wilkie, an experience middle leader and former senior leader, is directing middle leaders on rapid improvement strategies through Leadership Matters. KC asked how this programme would be monitored. JP explained that it is being overseen at different levels and it begins with him asking specific questions which is then directed down through the leadership team and into the departments.

CA asked whether there will be data analysis for each initiative that has been implemented, in order to assess its impact and use going forward. JP explained that there will be and he has data which was not shared today which takes into account all aspects of a student's school life, for example, attendance behaviour and in year data.

CA asked which group of the cohort will make the difference in his overall progress scores. JP explained it would be the disadvantaged group. JP noted that a lot of focus has been put on this group and every effort has been made to pitch interventions at the right level to them.

CA asked if the panel had any further questions. They did not.

CA thanked JP and his team for the work they are putting in for the Year 11 cohort.

Meeting concluded at 4.10pm.