



## **STOCKTON RIVERSIDE COLLEGE ANNUAL UPDATE 2017/2018**

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

As we look forward into the future, pressures on FE will almost certainly increase. Brexit and an uncertain political landscape, new initiatives such as the introduction of T levels, further roll out of the Apprenticeship Levy and challenges around a new Ofsted Framework all framed by ever reducing government funding provide a challenging environment. This paper highlights that whilst one can never be certain in such a landscape, our College is well positioned and continues to grow, prosper and deliver.

Stockton Riverside College (SRC) has a well-established, experienced and effective Corporation Board. The safeguarding of all students is assured through comprehensive and effective processes, an inclusive and vigilant culture and high expectations of staff and students. SRC continues to be a good college, as judged by Ofsted (Nov 2017) and by the Higher Education Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) (May 2018). Merger with RCC remains on track and on budget. The College remains financially robust and continues to invest to improve services to students and stakeholders (e.g. businesses). The College's reputation (for transformational partnership) is now excellent and manifests in tangible business benefits. Engaging with businesses has been a priority area for the College in recent years. SRC have developed and executed an aspirational business engagement strategy. There is strong, decisive, devolved and accountable leadership/management at all levels.

**REPORT DATED: 13 November 2018**

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## **PURPOSE**

The purpose of the report is to update Stockton Borough Council (SBC) members on the position and performance of their local college (Stockton Riverside College) with particular focus on the academic year 2017/2018.

## **Corporation Board**

Stockton Riverside College (SRC) has a well-established, experienced and effective Corporation Board that has ambitious expectations of continuous improvement coupled with a robust approach to financial sustainability. SRC's links with SBC are strong and apparent at the highest levels. Richard Poundford (retired Director of Regeneration, SBC) is our Vice Chair, Norma Wilburn (SBC cabinet member) is a Board member leading on safeguarding, equality, diversity and inclusion. Deborah Merritt (SBC, Chief Education improvement Advisor) undertakes an invaluable role as a co-opted member with particular focus on standards improvement. This year SRC has welcomed three new Board members to the team from Redcar and Cleveland College – all bring significant experience to bear.

## **Senior management team**

Recently the College has appointed several new senior managers, including:

- Lesley Graham            Campus Principal (SRC Teesdale)
- Ben Robinson            Campus Principal (Bede)
- Kay Taylor                Director of Human Resources (HR)
- Gary Potts                Director of Business Engagement
- Mandy Morris            Vice Principal Curriculum and Development

Ben, Kay, Gary and Mandy are all longstanding local residents, from Billingham, Stockton, and Redcar. Kay brings contemporary HR experience and other colleagues bring considerable curriculum expertise. SRC is delighted with the appointments and are in little doubt they will strengthen considerably what the College believes is an already a strong team.

## **Safeguarding**

The safeguarding of all students is assured through comprehensive and effective processes, an inclusive and vigilant culture and high expectations of staff and students. There are comprehensive welfare and safeguarding arrangements, including a named governor with a specific lead on safeguarding, with well-established and very effective partnership working to quickly progress concerns. This results in social services intervention for the most serious of cases; and well targeted and effective support for all those at risk, for example risk from substance abuse, domestic and honour based violence; and homelessness. The College maintains secure and well-structured safeguarding records through the Child Protection Online Monitoring System (CPOMS); a tool for comprehensive record keeping. There is a relentless focus on keeping safeguarding high profile with questions on feeling safe, behaviour, bullying; and radicalisation and terrorism, asked in all student surveys and student focus groups. The above has resulted in a high three year trend whereby students consistently agree they feel safe (student surveys and focus groups). For example, 95%+ (Upper Quartile (UQ)) of students agree that they are encouraged to understand and develop British Values; understand the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism and know

what to do if they have any concerns. There is timely and effective staff training and unanimous agreement from staff (staff surveys) that they have both a sound knowledge of safeguarding procedures and are aware of their responsibilities in relation to safeguarding. SRC received excellent feedback from Ofsted in relation to learners and feeling safe and understanding risks; safe working practices; effective links with external organisations and the impact of the lead Governor for safeguarding: *“The lead governor for safeguarding ensures that the board is fully briefed about any safeguarding concerns”*.

## **Student performance and experience**

SRC continues to be a good college, as judged by Ofsted (November 2017) and by the Higher Education by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) (May 2018).

In December 2017 SRC’s Ofsted Inspection concluded that the College continues to be Good: *“leaders and governors have a clear vision to place Stockton Riverside College at the centre of the local community and ensure that local learners receive a good-quality educational experience. This focus has resulted in a culture of high expectations for learners and staff that is both challenging and supportive.”*

In May 2017 the College’s Higher Education (HE) provision was reviewed by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA). The review concluded that the QAA continues to have confidence in the College’s HE provision in relation to both academic standards and the quality of the student academic experience. The College works closely with Teesside University and offers a range of programmes from Level 4 to full degrees. Success rates are sustained at a high level as are positive destinations and National Student Survey results.



There was excellent feedback from the whole College Matrix Assessment (June 2018) (Student Information, Advice and Guidance) with 12 areas of strength identified. Inspectors judged that professional integrity is strongly embedded through the work of the various teams with an impartial approach that is focused on the needs of individual students.

16-18 year old achievement rates are high with a positive 3 year trend. At 85.1% (2017/18) they are +3.6% points above the National Rate (NR), +1.6% points to 2016/17. Student destinations for 16-18 year olds are also high, with 87% progressing to education and employment (latest DfE data, 2014/15). Internally (more recent – 2015/16 and 2016/17) recorded data shows 91.9% positive destinations and 89.1% positive destinations to date from 2017/18.

There are good quality external work experience in the large majority of vocational study programmes with outstanding support for job seekers through flexible and responsive employability provision. In 2017/18 SRC had good student engagement in enterprise projects and events, including highly successful end of year Art and Design and Performing Arts shows with the latter receiving excellent feedback from College stakeholders following attendance at shows. The shows are very well attended by Council members. External visits/speakers are well-utilised in curriculum areas e.g. discussing industry requirements and completing mock interviews. The College delivers outstanding holistic development of ESOL students' understanding and skills regarding British and local culture; speaking and listening skills; and the skills needed for employment. This results in ESOL students rapidly integrating into both the College and their local environment and achieving both high achievement rates and high levels of positive destinations.

Adult achievement rates are outstanding. SRC have achieved a 5 year trend of high performance. At 92.8% in 2017/8, achievement rates are +4.9% points to the NR. Apprenticeship achievement rates are also good. Overall achievement is at 75%; +5.9% points to the NR. SRC have grown Apprenticeships significantly and recruit approximately 500 new apprentices every year.

The College delivers high achievement rates for students receiving high needs support. There were 119 students requiring high needs support undertaking provision across 6 departments in 2017/18, with an 85.9% achievement rate. The cohort of looked after children perform well with achievement rates in line with overall College achievement rates. Similarly, young people with Educational Health Care Plans, students with learning difficulties or disabilities, students accessing free school meals, and those students with postcode disadvantage uplift also perform well and in line with main cohort groups.

There is consistently high student satisfaction with teaching, learning and assessment with an overall positive three year trend; at 93% in 2017/18. There are good, and consistent, levels of student satisfaction across the majority of departments for:

- Learning at the right pace; 3 year trend of 90%+; 91% in 2017/18;
- Teaching on the course being good; 3 year trend of 93% agreement;

- Being constantly challenged to do their best; 3 year trend of 92%+; 94% in 2017/18.

In terms of areas for improvement the College needs to continue to improve achievement rates and value added scores at A Level and a minority of vocational subject areas. A new leadership team has been recruited for A Levels, and new staff have been recruited in other areas. Focused staff development is in place and greater levels of rigour in terms of quality assurance and various intervention strategies have been put in place.

## **Merger with Redcar and Cleveland College (RCC)**

Merger with RCC remains on track and on budget. During 2017/18 the College began the process of merging with RCC, culminating in merger on the 1 August 2018. From December 2017, SRC provided strategic management support that enabled RCC to progress from an Inadequate Ofsted Grade (October 2017) to an excellent monitoring visit (April 2018) when progress was judged by Ofsted as significant in four out of the six Ofsted themes (significant progress is the highest judgement Ofsted can make). During this period SRC's leadership and management capacity was such that it continued to improve both student performance and the student experience at SRC whilst supporting RCC to deliver improvements. Jason Faulkner (previously Vice Principal at SRC) has since become Campus Principal at RCC. Post-merger, a number of Economic and Technical Organisational (ETOs) reviews have been completed across both organisations, involving well over 200 staff, in the first 100 days. To date these have all gone well and the process will be complete no later than December 2018. The process will ensure staffing is efficient, effective and fit for purpose for the future. Recruitment at RCC, for the first time in many years, is up and SRC believe staff morale is also much improved (staff surveys are completed December of each year). SRC recognises that there is much to do but leaders and managers are confident that in the medium to long term the merger will significantly enhance the financial, quality and reputational position of both organisations.

## **Financial sustainability**

The College remains financially robust and continues to invest to improve services to students and stakeholders (e.g. businesses). In a sector where income has been declining, due to public sector funding cuts, the College has successfully managed to maintain and grow income levels. Borrowing as a percentage of income has been significantly reduced and a rigorous approach has enabled the College to carefully manage pay/income ratios and brought finance and quality together in the same conversation. A very well managed budget has led to cash levels that have enabled the College to invest in resources that both have a clear impact on the student experience but also and importantly enable organisational development e.g.:

- Significant improvements in Management Information Services leading to the production of user-friendly dashboards (to support managers and staff to effectively monitor provision and intervene quickly (where needed), e.g.:
  - Customer Relationship Manager (CRM) to support more effective employer engagement with almost 2000 active organisations;
  - Live finance system to enable front line managers to manage their budgets effectively and respond to student resource needs in a timely way;
  - Live HR systems and processes to enable effective personnel management are under development.

- Over the last three years £2.2m of capital was spent, of which £1.7m was directly on learning resources. Major items of expenditure include:
  - IT investment in major business systems and infrastructure (c. £430k; 2015-16 to 2017-18).
  - A new 4G football pitch at Bede Sixth Form (£208k; 2016-17);
  - Motor vehicle testing equipment (£21k; 2017-18);
  - Refurbishment of the Infinity training restaurant (£16k; 2017-18);
  - Grant funding (c.£0.8m) with a total investment of £1.1m to create a bespoke employer resource for NETA (Oil and Gas, Chemical, Petrochemical and Renewable Energy) (2016-17);
  - A mock aircraft cabin for Tourism and Aviation (£30k; 2016-17),
  - Refresh of 2 x science labs (£122k; 2016-17);

In addition, a rolling programme of IT refresh has taken place each year over the past three years. This has allowed an annual investment of c. £200k per annum on replacement of IT resources in both the classroom and the business infrastructure.

## **Student recruitment**

Student recruitment over recent years for 16-18 year olds has been relatively stable, the College recruits approximately 1,900 16-18 year olds each year. SRC dramatically increased the number of Apprenticeship starts up until 2016/17 from 165 Apprentice starts in 2013/14 to well over 500 in 2016/17. The introduction of the Apprenticeship Levy in 2017/18 saw a decline in Apprenticeship starts; however at this early stage in 2018/19 the College appears to be recovering well. HE numbers (approx. 300) have over recent years seen steady growth of c. 3% each year, which is the opposite to national trends and many of our neighbouring colleges' experiences. Approximately 3,000 adult students come to the College each year and NETA provides commercial training to approx. 4,000 clients each year.

## **Partnerships**

The College's reputation (for transformational partnership) is now excellent and manifests in tangible business benefits, not least of which being the College's position as preferred merger partner for both NETA (2015) and RCC (2018). The College has a high profile in key local partnerships that directly benefits students, for example the Key Stage 4 Transition Project with local schools. The College CEO attends the Stockton Strategic Education Board, the Schools Forum and the Secondary Head Teachers Group. The development of the new Logistics Academy (local large employers) provides further evidence of outstanding partnership development, as does the Sector Work Based Academies that support employers in their recruitment needs. In 2018/19 we aim to work closely with the Council to further develop our aspirations in developing a coherent and high impact strategy to support the Tees Valley's ambitions for City of Culture (2025) and further embed Stockton's place as a leading venue for culture, arts and performance. Another area of work we see as vital, again we anticipate working closely with Council colleagues, is to ensure a co-ordinated Stockton response to the devolution of the Adult Education Budget, maximising value for money and ensuring any potential opportunities are exploited for the benefit of Stockton residents and businesses.

Perhaps some of the best examples of commitment to partnerships is the work SRC undertake in terms of the inclusivity agenda. The College is inclusive and proud to have a strategic focus on those with the most to gain from developing their skills and knowledge; e.g.:

- *NEETs*: to reduce NEETs, the College entered into partnership with the Local Authority and Egglecliffe School to create the Skills Academy in Billingham. The Academy is a bespoke resource for students not yet ready for mainstream college and offers a broad curriculum, primarily at Level 1; we hope in 2018/19 to develop further our relationship with the Pupil Referral Unit to build an appropriate response around Stockton's Alternative Curriculum offer.
- *Prince's Trust*: Prince's Trust provision targets those who are the hardest to reach aged 16-25 and the provision regularly achieves national acclaim;
- *Working with the unemployed*: the College's work with the unemployed in respect of reskilling and upskilling is something SRC are particularly proud of. All courses for this group are specifically aimed at improving employability. The College works closely with the Department for Work and Pensions, with whom SRC have an excellent relationship, to meet both employer and student needs;
- *Services for vulnerable young people*: the College provides a comprehensive range of educational services for students with high needs, based on the excellent reputation with the Local Authority. In recent years, SRC have successfully refocused provision from a 'social care' type service, to a service firmly focused on enabling progression and independent living, often via meaningful work experience;
- *ESOL*: the College is well known for its extensive and very high quality ESOL provision, recruiting hundreds of students each year, providing an ethnically diverse college community with all the benefits relating to supporting equality and diversity, Prevent and British Values.

## **Employer engagement, Apprenticeships and inclusivity**

Engaging with businesses has been a priority area for the College in recent years. SRC have developed and executed an aspirational business engagement strategy, including the acquisition of NETA – this strategy is currently being refreshed with the support of governors. Strategic relationships have been established with a number of local companies and employers, for example PD Ports, Thirteen Group and North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust. The College (including NETA) now provides a range of services, including staff recruitment, sector based work academies and bespoke training services, to well over 1,000 businesses. SRC have excellent partnership working with key stakeholders to align College provision to priorities; e.g.:

- Merger with RCC (SRC preferred partner) is already evidencing benefits, e.g. expansion of Prince's Trust, Apprenticeship (CITB), Higher Education and employability programmes;
- The acquisition of NETA to help develop the College's services to employers. NETA currently works with over 480 employers and its commercial training activity has more than trebled SRC's previous income for bespoke training services (employers);
- Collaboration with the Local Authority to support the borough's curriculum strategy and create the Skills Academy;

- Introduction of Transition Project, working with local schools to ensure seamless KS4 transition to College;
- Direct influence on College strategy by local business leaders and agencies via the Enterprise Board;
- The establishment of a Logistics Academy including a well-attended Local Advisory Board led by national and local employers (e.g. Tees Valley Combined Authority, PD Ports, KP Snacks, Clipper, Northern Rail and Nestle) to create training opportunities for the logistics supply chain and provide valuable work experience and mentoring for study programme learners;
- Sector based work academies developed to respond to employer demand in recruiting to new vacancies (Health & Social Care and Catering) with 67% positive destinations in 2017/18 (+3% to 2016/17) and 59% progression into employment (+9%) which is considered excellent performance by DWP;
- Extensive Prince's Trust provision across the Tees Valley and surrounding areas has helped reengage those that are often the hardest to reach.

## **The College as an employer**

Governors, leaders, managers and have an accurate and comprehensive understanding of the quality of College provision; and of what needs to be done to further improve. There is strong, decisive, devolved and accountable leadership/management at all levels and staff understand and buy into the governing body and CEO's vision and strategies, seeing a real improvement in their ability to make a difference for students. College communication strategies are excellent and ensure staff are sufficiently informed as to key College developments. For example during merger, a publication called 'Ask Penny' was used to ensure staff were kept up to date of developments and could anonymously ask questions of concern, the document was well received by staff and we are told has been taken as an example of best practice and is now being used on a national basis. This has resulted in high levels of commitment from staff with a 3 year trend of very high, upper quartile (UQ) outcomes in the annual Staff Survey:

- 98% agreed they supported the strategic priorities of the College; = to 2016/17; UQ; +13% points to the External Benchmark (EB) compared to the other 36 colleges who also utilise QDP surveys;
- 97% agreed the College had made progress in the last 12 months; +3% to 2016/7; UQ; +35% points to EB;
- 95%+ were clear about both their own and their departments priorities/targets; respectively +1%/= to 2016/17; UQ; +8%/+11% points to EB.