

SECTION A: Context

A.1 The Equality & Diversity lead in College is an Assistant Principal who chairs a Committee that meets three times a year. Membership includes Principalship, teaching and support staff and up to two student representatives. Minutes from these meetings and any key reports are discussed and policies impact assessed by the Senior Leadership Team. Equality and Diversity and student issues are standing items at the weekly Senior Leadership Team meeting.

A.2 This report summarises the key areas of work considered by the Committee in 2019-20 and assesses the impact of this on the life of the College, the work of our staff and the achievements of our students. The work of the Committee during the spring and summer was affected by the coronavirus lockdown.

SECTION B: The College

B.1 The College is part of Summit Learning Trust. It is one of the largest level 3 education only Sixth Form Colleges in the region and provides A Level and level 3 BTEC Extended Diploma courses predominantly to students from Solihull and Birmingham.

B.2 The College's Mission is built around three key words, which capture our commitment to equality, fairness and opportunity, "Aspire, Invest, Respect". The Principal and Academic Coaches use the College's Mission with students during enrolment and induction, to emphasise the core values of the College. Students are invited to enter a competition during the year, producing a creative piece which captures these values. So that all students have specifically and formally committed themselves to this culture, the core values are also written into the Enrolment Contract. This approach also informs the College's position on the national Prevent agenda, which is set out in the position statement "Promoting Resilience: Preventing Vulnerability". This statement reflects a methodology for Prevent rooted in a positive and empowering Equality and Diversity approach.

B.3 The College's Equality & Diversity Policy aligns fully with the Equality Act 2010 and our Prevent duties including the promotion of British Values. Our Public Sector Equality Objectives for 2020-2024 map across to the College's strategic priorities and to our Mission Statement and that of the Trust.

B.4 The College was inspected by Ofsted in February 2020. In their report, Inspectors commented that students 'rightly feel valued and well supported by teachers in class. Students develop positive attitudes towards their learning. They work within a calm environment where they feel safe. They access good learning resources. Students feel that if they have any concerns, these will be taken seriously and dealt with promptly by staff'.

The report also acknowledged the improvements since the last inspection: 'Leaders have raised staff expectations of students. Consequently, staff are ambitious for students and ensure that they have access to a challenging curriculum. The majority of students participate in a broad enrichment programme which supports them in developing their broader skills'.

B.5 The College continues to monitor and close the gap between different student groups.

B.6 The College was successfully reaccredited with the Investors in Diversity Award from the National Centre for Diversity (NCFD) in December 2019. The reaccreditation process will commence at the end of the 2020/21 academic year.

B.7 The College holds British Dyslexia Association's Dyslexia Friendly Quality Mark which recognises the College's dyslexia-friendly practice. The College will have to apply for re-accreditation in the 2020/21 academic year.

B.8 The Student Development Officers have continued to help raise awareness of equality issues and celebrate diversity through the use of monthly calendars placed strategically on the inside of toilet doors as well as using the plasma screens around College.

B.9 Whole College events for prospective students and their parents/carers are important opportunities to highlight our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion. The College seeks to recruit student guides and subject ambassadors who reflect the diversity of the study body to support these events. Visitors are overwhelmingly positive in their evaluations, with frequent comments made about the friendly and warm welcome received from staff and students. We endeavour to meet the needs of our diverse student body and have formalised arrangements to provide prayer facilities for visitors including parents and carers.

B.10 The College's 'Planning for Progress' guidance encourages teachers to take opportunities to explore equality and diversity issues when they arise in lessons so that cross college themes including E&D are explicitly and consistently signposted by all curriculum teams.

B.11 Teams continue to evaluate their student results to identify any performance gaps. A key priority for 2019/20 has been a focus on value added measures to bring about improvements in student progress. Regular key assessments give both students and teams valuable information about progress. Key assessments allow subject teams to identify areas for development and take action.

B.12 The College timetable includes timetabled intervention sessions either before or after a lesson on Wednesdays and Thursdays. This dedicated time has allowed teachers to spend time with students to close gaps at an individual or small group level.

B.13 The Academic Coaching programme was updated to include sessions on equality and diversity and protected characteristics, and additional sessions on mental health.

B.14 Appointments could be made by students to see the College Nurse, the first time this service had been made available onsite. In addition, students have access to confidential health advice and support via Chat Health, an anonymous text service run by the school nursing team. Again, this provision was new.

B.15 The College continues to support staff and students who wish to have time with their families to celebrate important religious events and endeavours to make reasonable adjustments wherever possible.

SECTION C Staff

Staff Profile

C.1 The College applies its Equality & Diversity Policy in all areas in the employment process including the recruitment of new staff. Copies of the policy are available to applicants for employment at the College and all advertising promotes the College's commitment. We are a disability symbol employer and all disabled candidates who meet the minimum criteria for a post will be offered an interview. We will endeavour, when vacancies arise, to recruit suitably qualified staff and governors who better reflect the diversity of the College's student population with regard to protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act 2010.

C.2 In 2019/20 the number of staff employed at the College was approximately 190 and about half of the staff are on part-time contracts. Staff who work a full week but are term time only are included in the part-time figures. There are significantly more female members of staff than male. The majority of female staff are employed on a part-time basis whereas the majority of male staff are employed in a full-time capacity.

C.3 The age profile of staff overall is about the same each year and there is a spread in the age of staff from 18 to over 65.

C.4 In terms of ethnicity, 18% of staff at the College are Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME), which is significantly higher than the Borough and the national average of teachers in England. However, it is well below the diversity amongst our students. About 11% of our staff have declared a disability as defined by the Equality Act 2010.

C.5 The College offers a greater amount of flexibility to staff due to changes in legislation and our policies, including support for those who wish to phase their retirement and are therefore recorded as part time.

Staff Development and Training

C.6 Staff development days included training on a range of E&D aspects. External trainers delivered sessions on British Values in the curriculum and supporting trans and gender diverse students. West Midlands Counter Terrorism Unit also delivered a Prevent session, with a focus on the growing threat of the far right. Internal trainers were also used to deliver sessions on dyslexia and the staff development days included sessions which deepened the work of the twilight sessions (see C.7).

C.7 Twilight sessions for teaching staff built on last year's focus of the psychology of learning and cognitive load. Sessions this year used the framework of the six principles to support great teaching and learning. These sessions helped planning better meet individual student needs. The February 2020 inspection report noted: 'Teachers use their expert subject knowledge to plan interesting lessons that build on students' existing knowledge. They introduce the most important concepts early in the course. They help students to use them with greater sophistication over time' and 'Teachers regularly review the way they order their teaching so that students have the opportunity to revisit key learning. This helps students store key learning topics in their long-term memory'.

C.8 A number of staff attended training sessions on mental health over lockdown. This included staying mentally well, mindfulness for wellbeing, young people and mental health, staying mentally well during COVID and tips for positive mental health.

C.9 Staff LGBT 'allies' continued to attend the LGBT network through the Skills & Education Group.

SECTION D Students

Student Cohort

D.1 The number of students from Birmingham postcodes has stabilised at 68% of cohort, with 31% coming from Solihull postcodes.

D.2 The percentage distribution of students at College continues to be about the same with the percentage of female students about 51%. There is one student who describes their sex as non-binary and there are four trans students.

D.3 The College continues to have a diverse population in terms of ethnicity. The single largest student group remains White British followed by students from Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Indian heritage.

D.4 The number of students in receipt of bursary and/or free meals saw no significant change in 2019/20. Priority for bursary fund is given to vulnerable students – those in care, care leavers, students living independently and in receipt of Income Support, disabled students in receipt of both Employment Support Allowance and Disability Living Allowance and students registered as carers. In addition, discretionary awards are made to students whose total household income fell below a threshold. The levels of award were proportionate to the levels of income. Additional emergency awards were made during the year to students in crisis because of referrals from staff.

D.5 Students with additional learning needs continue to be well supported, including over the remote learning period by the Additional Learning Support team. As well as disclosures on application, some students choose to inform us after they have enrolled and staff are proactive in referring students to the team if they suspect there may be a need, which as yet has not been identified.

D6 Over lockdown and the remote learning period, regular contact was made with vulnerable students to ensure their welfare. The Academic Coach team were also in regular contact with their students, helping to remove barriers to learning. In the summer term the LRC was open to not only vulnerable students and children of key workers but also to those with technology issues at home to allow them to effectively continue with their studies.

Student Societies and Groups

D.7 The Student Development Officers promote student societies and groups to new students during our Welcome to College Day in the summer term, this year a virtual event. A range of societies have continued to flourish with a membership of approximately 200. New societies introduced include Bollywood Society, BAME Society and gym society.

D.8 Student Health Ambassadors are recruited by the Student Development Co-ordinator and have the opportunity to work with a range of external agencies and providers who promote the health and wellbeing of young people. This group of students are recruited from a range of A Level and BTEC backgrounds. Health Ambassadors are trained to provide peer education and awareness raising campaigns to fellow students. For example, alcohol awareness, domestic violence and stop smoking.

D.9 Facilities for prayer were popular amongst our students. The Meriden building continued to be used as a quiet space for prayer and reflection. Friday prayers remains popular and is supported by staff. Prayer times are discussed with and communicated to students. We continue to keep this provision under review so that we can continue to maintain this service to staff and students.

D.10 Students have demonstrated their commitment to supporting communities through their charitable fundraising including:

- Bake sales in support of Macmillan, Betel, Breast Cancer Haven, Children in Need and Young Carers
- 'Wear Pink' in support of Breast Cancer Awareness
- 'Tea and Talk' fundraising for Mental Health Foundation
- Fundraising activities for Mind
- Remembrance Day fundraising
- Christmas Jumper day for Save the Children
- Childhood Tumour Trust raffle

D.11 Links with Solihull Carers Trust and Young Adult Carers were strengthened with awareness events over the year to promote the support available for those students who may be in a caring role, as well as drop in sessions being available for students who are young carers. The college intends to apply for the Young Carers Award in 2020/21.

D.12 Academic Coaches referred students for group anxiety support sessions run by a Student Development Coordinator.

D.14 The College celebrates national events such as Diversity Day, British Dyslexia Awareness week and Mental Health Awareness week to raise awareness, encourage discussion and promote positive role models who have successfully overcome the barriers they may have faced.

Student Destinations

D.15 Students seeking apprenticeships or full-time employment are supported through targeted Careers/Employability one to ones and Academic Coaching sessions.

D.16 The College works hard to ensure that students from widening participation postcodes access the support arrangements available to them. The College is involved in locally available access schemes such as The A2B scheme at University of Birmingham, Routes to the Professions, Pathways to Birmingham and the Aston Progression Pathways scheme.

D.17 The College offers comprehensive support and guidance to a large number of students aspiring for the most competitive of courses and universities including Oxbridge, Medicine, Dentistry and Veterinary Science. This support includes:

- Specialist Academies offering a range of tailored activities and opportunities such as the Pre-Medical School, the Psychology Research School and English Academy.
- The college provides a Stretch and Challenge Summer School for students applying for competitive courses and includes a range of talks, activities and visits from key universities including Oxford. There are also sessions on test preparation and personal statements.
- There is a discrete Oxbridge support programme offering test preparation, mock interviews and support with applications. Curriculum Areas will also provide subject specialist support to throughout the process.

D.18 The number of students progressing onto positive destinations from the College remains incredibly strong, with the majority progressing on to Higher Education. We are very successful in getting our students into university and higher apprenticeships because of the enriched learning opportunities we provide and the tremendous amount of personalised guidance and support we offer.

D.19 In 2020, destinations were collected for Year 13 completers and positive destination figures are in keeping with DfE value. Higher Education acceptances are consistently higher than UCAS national figures for all applicants, with excellent progression for BTEC students. A substantial number of students are securing places on apprenticeships and in direct employment. The overall number of 2019 leavers going into paid employment, an apprenticeship or traineeship remains consistent with 2018.

D.20 Data for 'All SSFC UCAS Applicants' (i.e. Year 13 plus "gap year") on the '2020 UCAS Progression Report', indicates that the "Acceptance rate" for males and females is virtually identical for 2020.

D.21 Data from the 'UCAS Progression Report' shows the College's overall application data compared to national figures. This data is presented in the form of broader, more general, ethnic groups than those used internally by the College. The percentage of all ethnic groups – Asian, white, black and mixed applicants – placed in HE is above national figures.