

LONGLEY PARK SIXTH FORM COLLEGE

POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR AN INCLUSIVE LEARNING CULTURE

In order to raise participation and achievement for all the communities of North East Sheffield the College must develop a culture which is safe for all users and which celebrates achievement at the same time as promoting accessibility. This culture must be all pervasive and evident from the first day we open. We have already signalled it clearly in our prospectus, and this discussion paper aims to show how we might deliberately build it from here on.

There are already several key policies in place or under development, which will be important elements in this culture. The Equality & Diversity Policy, our curriculum, and the value-added based progress monitoring system being developed by Directors are all key aspects. I want to focus on how the college will interact with students outside exclusively academic work and to explore how we deliberately and systematically build the culture we are aiming for.

I think that we can look at three core sets of policies and procedures in this way, which can, taken together, develop staff and student attitudes. They will create an ethos and atmosphere, which can then influence everything else we do. These are:

- Systems for student rewards
- Student disciplinary systems
- Structures for student representation

In all of these areas we need to build on the experience our students will have had at our partner schools. They are used to clarity, positive reinforcement and staged approaches. For us NOT to do something they are used to will have as much of an impact as us doing something new or different. We must also remember that the students are looking for progression. They have left school and want to see the difference. Continuity and change need to be balanced.

We must also be very aware of the role of parents/carers. The perception that parents were not properly part of the post-16 partnership previously was a significant factor in the public support behind Longley Park. We need to make sure that we make the commitment we have already made to work in partnership very real and evident in practice. *It should be made clear that we will involve parents/carers at all stages of a full-time 16-19 year olds period of study at Longley Park, regardless of whether they are over 18 or not.*

Student Rewards

The ideas outlined here can be taken together or looked at as individual initiatives. I think we must have a higher profile rewards system than many SFCs. Students are used to these systems in our partner schools. The reward system shows publicly that we support a student who has achieved and this can be especially important when post-16 education is new to a family.

Possibilities & Proposals

1. College Colours - a deliberately old-fashioned sounding approach to give a sense of tradition. Staff would be able to make formal detailed nominations of students across any level and in any area. This could range from sporting achievement across community work, academic achievement and contributions to college life. Each term the Principal would select about 12 nominees for the award and they would be invited to a short ceremony with their parents. The physical reward takes two forms. The first would be the traditional scarf *and/or pin* badge. The second would be a place on an

expedition. The group given colours each term would be given a set amount of money per head to run an expedition. They would also be allocated a senior member of staff and a governor to work with. They would be encouraged to try and raise more money so that the expedition they would plan themselves could be really memorable. They would be expected to present back to governors. *Students who have been awarded college colours would enter a virtual Hall of Fame, which would be displayed on the plasma screen and on the college internet and intranet. Students would have to agree to the use of their name and image as part of their agreements at enrolment.*

It is possible that students could have some input into nomination, probably through their student representatives.

2. Tutor Group Attendance - (EMAs already provide a financial incentive for attendance). We can calculate the total percentage attendance for each tutor group each week. At the end of the autumn and spring terms we can then identify the group with the best attendance at each curriculum level and reward them with a visit which they plan with their tutor and a senior member of staff. This could involve an over-night stay. *The EMA criteria for authorised/unauthorised attendance would be applied, with the Principal having the discretion to remove individual students from the calculations as appropriate. Sue Jackson was to discuss with local faith leaders appropriate consideration to be given for non-Christian religious festivals.*
3. Postcards Home - On a more day-to-day basis we need to share student success with parents and carers. We could print large numbers of postcards with trendy views of the new buildings on them. Staff can be encouraged to record noteworthy success from any field on these. They would only have to identify the student and put them in the internal mail for admin support to send home and copy onto the student file. *The postcards should be photocopied by admin support and a copy be sent to the students personal tutor.*
4. Classroom feedback - building student self-esteem through positive feedback is part of the success at all our partner schools. We need a clear marking and assessment policy which ensures positive and regular feedback, and clear guidance on continued improvement. A cross-staff commitment to building self-esteem using praise in the classroom should be part of this.
5. End of Year - all students who complete the year with us should be invited to a final event which combines awards evening with prom. *This would not be a black-tie event. It would also be important to try to prevent this simply becoming an opportunity for students to drink. A venue sufficiently large enough for the entire cohort to attend would have to be found. It might be possible to award academic and general prizes, sponsored by local organisations. All students who complete the first year would also receive a memento like a mug. A student yearbook could also be produced, though this was likely to be an enrichment option.*
6. We may be able to negotiate a deal with the catering contractor where staff would be able to use small scale rewards from the café as prizes for classroom activities. These do not have to be purchased by individual staff, and also can be seen to be part of the overall structure.

The idea of students collecting stamps (perhaps in their student handbook) was rejected as being too similar to the system used at Firth Park.

Student Disciplinary Systems

I think that it would be useful to divide these into three strands which need rather different approaches. These would be traditional 'discipline' issues from poor classroom behaviour to big issues such as violence, drugs

and vandalism; poor attendance and work levels; and inter-student problems which get as serious as bullying and abuse.

Disciplinary Issues

- A set of clear College Expectations covering classroom behaviour – published in diary and in all *appropriate rooms (classrooms, LRC, Library etc)* and agreed to as part of the Learning Contract. *It would be appropriate to discuss this as a full staff body in July.*
- A referral system to give all staff the ability to access support from Tutors/ Directors & Deputies when they need it. Actions here are focussed on contact with parents/carers. Can also use Student Diaries – require students to monitor their own behaviour and record this in their diary. This can be reviewed against staff perceptions in a regular meeting. Aim is to get the student to manage themselves. Can be part of a contract. We should be able to flag registers to get a comment on a particular student from each teacher at the end of the session.
- A system of Student Contracts to be administered by Directors & Deputies – with some training on how these can be used for maximum impact so that they change student behaviour rather than help us get rid of problems. These will be used more often for work & attendance than for disciplinary issues, and when they don't work for disciplinary issues, the problem usually has to move on to the formal Disciplinary hearing.
- A formal Disciplinary Process at Principal /VP level – following all the normal procedures around a hearing with parents/carers. Appeal to a second panel with a governor. Sanctions at this level *would include* expulsion from college, removal from specified courses & activities, and notification on all references. This will inevitably involve Director or equivalent presenting a case to a panel, with a chance for the student with support from parent or other advocate, given the opportunity to present their side. Where the student chooses to bring no support, or where they don't turn up, Student Services staff can be asked to present for the student.
- Emergency immediate suspension of students, *pending investigation*, available from Principal or VPs – usually for drugs (*including alcohol and smoking inside the college buildings?*), weapons or violence.

The 'road to perdition' is therefore:

Referral to tutor - referral to Director - attempt to change using diary or similar approach - attempt to change using contract (with parents notified if not involved already) - hearing leading to disciplinary action - appeal - the end!

Of course this chain can, and should, be broken out of at any point.

Attendance, Punctuality & Work Levels

This area is probably the most commonly activated area on the disciplinary spectrum and may be more effectively tackled if it is seen as something different. We therefore have a separate track called the Commitment Policy.

- *Pre-stage 1 - Individual teachers deal with the issue as part of classroom management.*
- Stage 1 - Commitment Interview with subject teacher who warns the student that they are not meeting the commitment levels required to meet the College Contract. Aim to identify reasons and refer to Student Services *as appropriate* for support. Time frame for action should be two weeks *after the interview*. *The personal tutor should be informed that the commitment interview has taken place and if the student has been referred to student services. The personal tutor should keep an over-view of this to co-ordinate action if commitment interviews are taking place in more than one subject.*
- Stage 2 - level does not improve so subject teacher refers to Tutor. Two options – can either run a second Commitment Interview, or involve Director and parents/carers. This second level should lead to an agreed

set of actions recorded in a letter to parents/carers. The support provided by the college should be just as evident as the actions from the student. This could include catch-up work, agreed sessions in the LRC, attendance levels, deadlines for handing in work and actions covering Learning Support and Student Services. The timeframe for the targets should be two weeks. If achieved a letter is sent praising the change and the process ends.

- Stage 3 - if the targets in the letter are not met the Director, with involvement of parents/carers sets up a formal contract. All should be clear that if the targets in the contract are not met it means that the College Learning Contract has been broken and the issue will be referred to the Principal with a recommendation that the student is removed. Timeframe for action should be two weeks. If this achieves changed behaviour, the process reverts to Stage 2. The student and parents are sent a letter praising the improved behaviour – and setting the framework for the next two weeks.
- Stage 4 - effectively the final disciplinary hearing. Director presents to a panel same as Disciplinary. Appeal to second panel including a governor.

Inter-Student Issues

These can be very difficult to manage. Where there is violence or an infringement of the Equality & Diversity Policy this can be handled under the Disciplinary line. Where it is two students in disagreement, or accusations of bullying, we need a formal Anti- Intimidation & Conflict Resolution Process.

- This should be run through Student Services so that students do not automatically feel they are in a disciplinary situation.
- It should aim to support students who are facing bullying, and provide a safe structure for resolving this.
- It can lead to a referral to relevant Directors to use the Disciplinary process if required.
- The core of the process will be an interview where Student Services staff act as mediators and guide students to an agreed resolution which is recorded in letters to all parties including parents/carers.
- Failure to act according to the agreement becomes a Disciplinary issue.

Student Representation

Most of our partner schools have some form of tutor group representative system with a School Council. We need to build on this tradition but move it forward.

- 10 Directly elected Student Representatives. Prospective Reps. have to post their prospectus on the Student Services website and the election is conducted online.
- Once elected, the reps. themselves vote for Officers:
 - Chair
 - Deputy Chair – Equality & Diversity
 - Deputy Chair – Health & Safety
 - Student Governor – NUS
 - Finance & Charities Officer
 - 5 x Directorate Reps.
- Student Governor and the Chair both attend Governors meetings, but only the Governor votes.
- Chair is responsible for running the whole group and has support from Student Services Manager. The constitution will require an annual programme of activities and a budget to be prepared by the group and presented to governors via the Principal.
- The two Deputy Chairs sit on the relevant college committees to ensure student concerns are heard.
- Finance & Charities Officer acts as Treasurer and should lead on fund raising and allocation of grants. This covers charitable donations, support for fellow students and grants to help set up new enrichment

activities. The Student Services Manager will need to work closely with this officer. Release of funds will require counter-signature by the Student services Manager.

- The five Directorate Reps. feed into the quality systems and should be involved in the Self-Assessment process. This needs to be structured carefully, but should include them in validating outcomes, acting as a channel for issues to be raised by students, and involvement in planning as a student voice.
- The Reps. should meet with the Student Services Manager weekly and with the Principal half-termly.
- The Chair and Student Governor will also meet with the Principal before each Governors meeting so that their input into meetings can be actively supported.
- All students should be able to contact the reps through student Services and through their Intra-net pages.
- Student Reps should have a substantial input to the enrolment and induction process and could be paid for this.
- The term of office should run from 1st January giving elections in December. This means second year students cover the very beginning of the year but are released before exams. New students have a chance to build some relationships and confidence before they have to put themselves forward.
- *Student Representatives would all require training for their roles.*

Another related policy, which will have a key impact on ethos, will be Student Mentoring. We have a bit more time before this one needs to be in place!

The following policies now need to be developed:

1. Smoking policy
2. Marking and assessment policy
3. Drugs, weapons and violence policy

The following paperwork needs to be developed:

1. Contracts
2. Commitment interview records

Further discussion is required on:

1. The ethos surrounding the referral system
2. College expectations covering behaviour