



## Groby Community College Governor Visit Record

<b>Name of governor</b>	Evelyne Maher
<b>Date and Time of visit</b>	29.11.2012
<b>Purpose of visit</b> Previously agreed with the Principal	<b>Learning walk, drop in to lessons, meeting with students as part of my role as a P16 link governor.</b>
<b>Links with the College Improvement Plan</b> How does the visit relate to a priority in the College Improvement Plan? Quality Assurance	
<p><b>Governor observations and comments</b> E.g. How long did the visit last? What did you see? What did you learn? What would you like clarified?</p> <p>The visit lasted 2 hours. I arrived at the college at 10:00 am and was met by the Director of P16. We started our learning walk with the Art department. The Subject Leader was teaching a class of 6 yr12 students and setting up their task for the lesson. I had an informal chat with one of the students. Then we moved on to Graphics where the Subject Leader was overseeing a group of yr13's hard at work in front of their computers while Sarah (NQT) was circulating and answering potential queries. We dropped into a yr13 Biology class where students were working on exam type questions, I talked to a few of them, then, in another room, the second half of the yr13 Biology cohort was being taught on Productivity/yield. We observed for a short while before dropping into a Psychology class.</p> <p>The 1<sup>st</sup> half of my visit was completed with an observation of a French class where the Curriculum Leader was teaching a mixed group of yr12 fast track students and yr 13's. It was a grammar lesson on the different uses and construction of tenses. I had a word with a couple of fast track students.</p> <p>At that point I made my way to the Conference Room where I was joined by 2 yr13 and 1 yr12 student. I asked Director of Post 16 not to be present so that the students felt that they could express themselves freely. After introductions and a quick explanation of the purpose of my visit I turned to the questionnaire I had prepared (copy enclosed). 30 minutes later I emerged from the room and rejoined the Director of Post 16 for a drop in to the Maths department. The Assistant Curriculum Leader of Maths was teaching a group of yr13's, asking them to use the first 10 minutes of the lesson to assess their own strengths and weaknesses ahead of the forthcoming January exams. I talked to each small group of students (16 in total). At 11.45 I made my way back to the Conference Room to interview 5 more students (2 yr13's and 3 yr12's). The same questionnaire was used.</p> <p>So these are the facts now I can turn to what I learnt From my walk and lesson observations I cannot stress enough how pleased I was with the overall attitude of both students and staff. In every class, there was a sense of purpose and concentration. Everyone was at ease. The students I talked to during the lessons all said that they knew what was expected of them, they praised their tutors for all the help they were given, stating that in all departments there was always someone available to answer their questions and that the feed back from teachers was good, both in quantity and quality. At this point I feel that I should single out Ian Maynard as every Maths student in his class mentioned how approachable, dedicated and supportive he was. The only matter of concern I found during my learning walk was that a very noisy "life study" lesson was taking place between the Biology and Psychology classes. For whatever reason all 3 rooms had their doors opened and it must have been a distraction and a hindrance to concentration for the teachers but more crucially for the students.</p> <p>The main findings from the answers to the questionnaire can be summarised as follows:</p> <p>The positives of the college are all to do with the teaching, small size classes, improved equipment and facilities, great feedback to both coursework and homework...All students said that there was a better sense of cohesion in the college and a clearer identity.</p> <p>The negatives were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Canteen where they all stated that the price of food had gone up and the choice and quality gone down. They said that they miss the pasta bar and that everything served to them is fried and unhealthy.</li> <li>• The yr12 students felt that because they returned to college later than the other year groups they could not attend the induction day. Therefore they were not involved in the setting up of their "house", the design of their badge and when they joined their tutor group no formal introduction was made.</li> </ul>	



- The last point which they all mentioned and felt very strongly about can be summed up by the question they asked me: “Why is English not taught in sets”?! At P16 it no longer affects them but they remember vividly not being “stretched enough” when they were in yr10 and 11. They said they couldn’t go deeper into some aspects of a subject or contribute in class for fear that other students would feel that they were “showing off”, they also added that there was a student forum on the subject but no one took any notice of their opinions and it was disbanded. A couple of yr13 are mentors to yr10 students who continuously voice their dismay at the current situation in their English classes, saying that the weaker students are not receiving enough help and the more able ones are not challenged enough.

All P16 students were happy with the choice of subjects on offer in the curriculum.

On the topic of uniforms, the overall view was a positive one. However only one student was in favour of a “business type uniform” for P16 and all the boys were disconcerted at the banning of shorts in the summer. They felt a bit “hard done by” as girls could wear light dresses and skirts and therefore they thought that in order to redress the balance they should be able to wear long “smart” chino style shorts.

As for the help and information provided to help students choose what to do after leaving college, the general consensus was that the process of applying to universities was very clear and thorough but if you opted for another pathway then the onus was more on yourself to seek out the relevant information.

### **Any key issues arising for the governing body**

e.g. The way resources are allocated, the way the school communicates, progress in implementing a key policy

The key issues emerging from my visit and the ones which will require a follow up are the questions raised by the students. Having taken the time to listen to them, their qualms should be addressed. Why is the food on offer in the canteen of such poor quality? We should be very pleased that the students themselves are keen to eat a more healthy diet and as an academy we must have more freedom to choose our caterer. Is it time to put our contract out to tender? Perhaps this question could be on the agenda at the next Student Wellbeing Committee?

The teaching of English in ability groups is never far from everyone’s mind and has been discussed many times before; but in view of the strong feeling expressed by the students (and by some of the parents) it may be time to re-open the debate. Results are good in English therefore the temptation is not to change anything. But have we considered that they could change for the better? At least the students should be kept in the loop. The rationale for the college’s decision should be explained to them so they don’t feel as though their opinion is being ignored.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Director of Post 16, all the teachers and students who made my visit to the college so enjoyable. I left at 12.30pm with a spring in my step and a feeling of pride at being involved with such an uplifting, competent and charming group of people.

### **Forward to:**

Principal as draft for discussion then report to be circulated to T&L group.