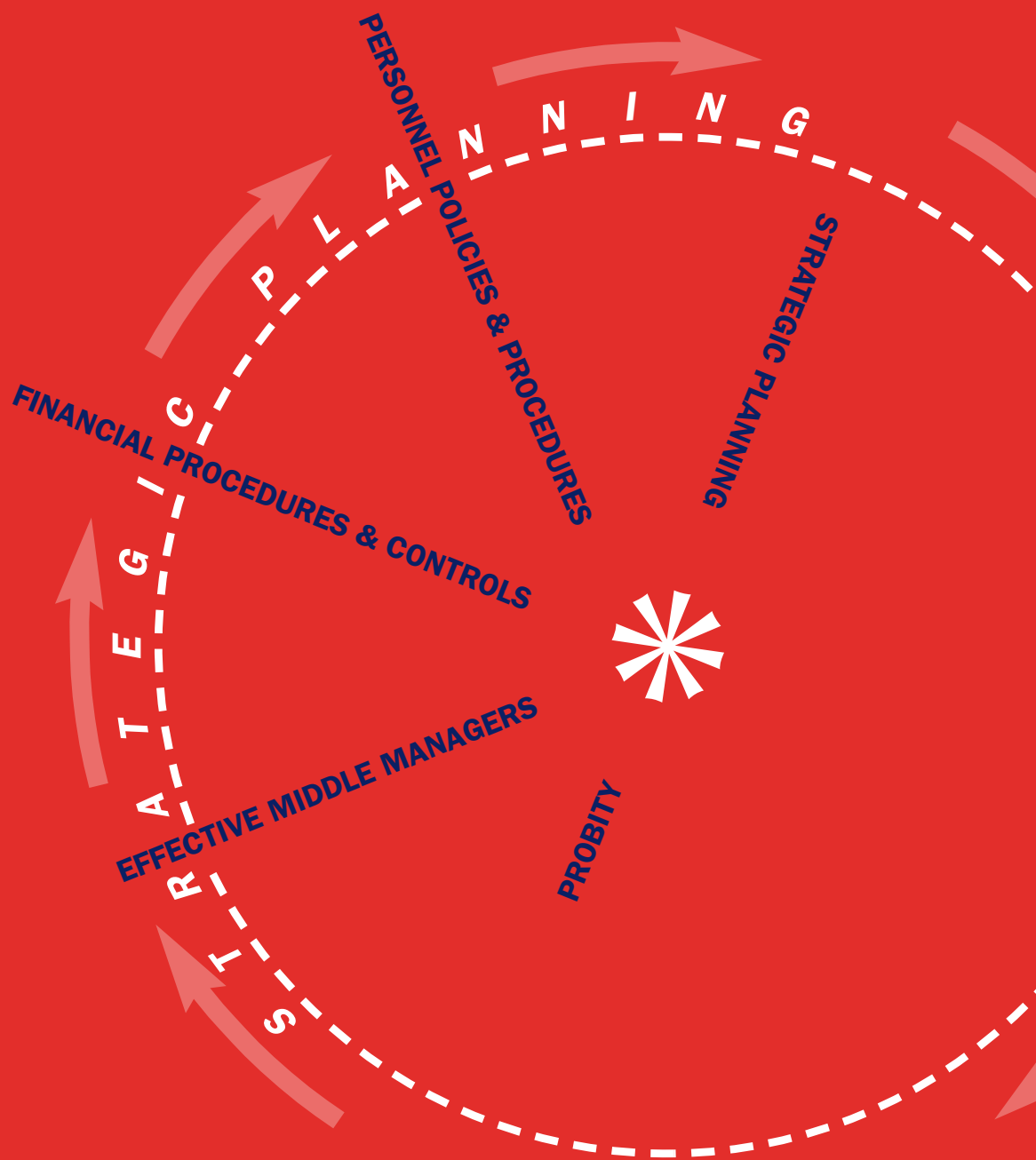


good governance & management at Thanet College



effective middle managers

INTRODUCTION

The FEFC Inspection of Thanet College in May 1998 assessed College Governance and Management as Grade 1 outstanding provision, which has many strengths and few weaknesses.

The College has been successful in bidding for resources under Strand 4 of the Standards Fund to develop this information pack as a contribution to sharing 'good practice' with other further education colleges in Kent. We are pleased to take this opportunity.

Our aim has been to produce material which conveys the overall nature and character of the approach which we follow at Thanet College without in any sense wishing to produce an A to Z guide. Our intention has been to make the pack useful, practical and supportive of colleagues in Kent and other colleges who believe there is a need to review their approach to aspects of management and governance.

The units in this pack cover the following Governance and Management issues:

- Strategic Planning
- Personnel Procedures and Policies
- Financial Procedures and Controls
- Probity
- Effective Middle Managers

COMMENTARY OF THE THANET COLLEGE INSPECTION TEAM

'The College is well managed...managers have a clear understanding of their role and of their individual accountability for the efficient use of resources and for the performance of their section. The College has an appropriate range of committees.

All committees have the primary purpose of providing opportunities for staff at different levels to inform the development of policy and management decisions.

Section and division plans are produced to a common format and brought together by senior managers. Managers and the Corporation set operational targets at section division and college level and these form the basis of regular monitoring throughout the year. A reliable information system supports management at all levels and managers have ready access to essential up to date information.'

CORE PRINCIPLES

- The pivotal role of strategic planning in supporting the direction and development of the College.
- The contribution of middle managers to strategic planning and the delivery of the Annual Operating Plan.
- The value placed upon performance target setting throughout the College at corporate, divisional, section and individual level ensuring clear and strong linkage with strategic planning.



- The good match which is maintained between the need to provide the very best service to all our students defined within the College's Strategic Plan and the skills, competencies and experience of our staff sustained through sound staff development practice.
- The support for middle managers achieved through a framework of effective advice and guidance in ensuring the College acts in a co-ordinated way where consistency in decision making and practice is vital.
- Communication networks aimed at enabling and empowering staff, in particular middle managers.

KEY FEATURES OF THE THANET COLLEGE APPROACH TO THE ROLE OF MIDDLE MANAGERS

- The promotion of a culture which encourages and supports responsible decision making.
- Clarity in the definition of the accountabilities and responsibilities of middle managers and the supportive environment in which they make a key contribution to the work of the College.
- Job design and remuneration based upon sound job analysis and evaluation enabling the College to act consistently as a single employer and support the recruitment and retention of good quality staff who are well matched to the specification of their appointments.
- Staff development programmes which identify development needs geared both to meeting current job requirements and supporting succession planning.
- A top-down/bottom-up approach enabling middle managers to make an informed and effective contribution to the work of the College.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Principal

Overall responsibility for the employment, deployment and management of all College personnel to ensure the College delivers high quality services to all its students making the best use of College personnel. Specifically to promote a culture which empowers middle managers to perform their duties in an enlightened and skilled way.

Deputy Principal and Divisional Managers

Pro-active role in the support and empowerment of middle managers on a day to day basis.

Definition of Middle Managers at Thanet College

All middle managers have responsibilities for the line management of other personnel, for the management of financial budgets and for delivering specific targets related to the College's Strategic Plan.

Impact of the role of Middle Managers

The role of middle managers lends the following strengths to Thanet College's manner of operation:



- The effective delivery of the Annual Operating Plan.
- Policy development and operational management is strengthened through decision making at the appropriate level of responsibility.
- The broadly based work of the College including external partnerships is well supported at middle management level.
- Management of communication, with an emphasis on good briefing of middle managers, to enable them to be well informed at all times.
- The ability to adapt effectively to the changing operational context.
- Management of quality standards and overall performance is enhanced.
- Recruitment and retention of staff and succession planning is facilitated by the priority given to the professional development framework which supports middle managers.
- The ability of the College to make a quick response to issues as they emerge.

Support for Middle Managers

The College has in place arrangements which support middle managers designed to enhance their effectiveness. These relate to three key areas:

- **MANAGERS' ACCOUNTABILITIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**
- **THE FRONT LINE SUPPORT AND TOOLS REQUIRED BY MIDDLE MANAGERS**
- **THE COMMUNICATION NETWORK WHICH UNDERPINS THE WORK OF THE COLLEGE**

This section outlines the main features and impact of the network of arrangements.

MANAGERS ACCOUNTABILITIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- **Strategic Planning**

Clear definition of the roles and responsibilities of managers in the operational delivery of the Strategic Plan achieved through the annual setting of performance targets and indicators.

Impact

The contribution of middle managers in the production, implementation, monitoring and review of the Strategic Plan is fundamental to the integration of the work of their section into the Strategic Plan framework.

- **Contributions Model**

All College courses are required to make a set contribution to College overhead costs and the costs of central sections. Managers are required to provide courses on a basis which includes the contribution elements.

Impact

The contribution is calculated on a course-by-course basis. When aggregated into the



section's budget, section managers have discretion in adjusting elements such as group size, teaching hours and the costs required to meet the required contribution to achieve best value for money.

THE FRONT LINE SUPPORT AND TOOLS REQUIRED BY MIDDLE MANAGERS

- **Budgetary Control-Management Reports**

Reports produced monthly detailing income and expenditure at section level highlighting elements on an exceptions basis which require further attention. Financial targets are based upon actual student numbers for the year. The College Management Accountant supports throughout the process.

Impact

Used widely by section managers in the financial management of their section. Income and expenditure performance is monitored against targets set in the light of actual student numbers for the College year. Support and development needs are quickly identified to enable middle managers to achieve a high level of competence in this aspect of their work.

- **Student Performance Analysis**

Reports available – 1) formative analysis available monthly of each College full-time course and courses over 24 weeks, excluding open and distance learning, showing student retention profiles and highlighting trends for the year.

2) summative reports available annually (using Goldmine reporting software) relating to student achievement and retention for all College courses including the use of benchmark data for comparison purposes.

Impact

Key management information used widely by managers. Supports target setting, monitoring and informs Annual Operating Plan. Also supports the production of the Section 50 Report and provides information to the Quality and Standards Committee of Governors

- **Annual Training Plan**

A comprehensive delivery plan for all courses formulated to set student achievement and retention targets. Prepared in February each year.

Impact

Middle managers are a key planning tool – they identify courses for the following year. The outcomes are used to inform the production of FEFC funding units to support the College's annual bid and to support the setting of performance indicators.

- **Teaching Performance at Section Level**

The College Staff Tutor provides each section manager with a report based upon an extensive programme of lesson observations undertaken across the College relating to the quality of teaching and learning and the management of programmes. A mentor scheme supports the induction of newly appointed staff and longer serving staff where



development needs have been identified. A staff tutor framework provides section staff with mentor support for improving the quality and outcomes of teaching and learning across the College.

Impact

As part of the on-going professional development responsibility of all middle managers, each manager uses the information from the report to support colleagues in targeting areas where improvements are required. The Mentorship Scheme is available to new managers, to support their induction, and to longer serving staff where development needs are identified. Middle managers play a pivotal role in raising the standards of teaching and learning in their section with support available from the College Staff Tutor.

THE COMMUNICATION NETWORK WHICH UNDERPINS THE WORK OF THE COLLEGE

- **Principal's Update**

Personal briefing note from the Principal to all members of staff which covers items of significance relating to the work of the College.

Impact

Provides a regular update for all members of staff on key issues.

- **College Newsletter**

Circulated widely on a termly basis within the College and available to all members of staff with contributions from a wide base.

Impact

Provides all members of staff with the opportunity to be briefed on formal and less formal issues affecting the life of the College and its staff. A wide range of staff contribute to the newsletter.

- **Special Projects/Working Groups**

Activity set within a defined brief specified by the Senior Management Team geared to meeting the needs of special situations leading to the production of a report with recommendations for further action and summary of action taken. Middle managers contribute expertise and information depending upon the nature of the project.

Impact

Usually relates to pieces of work which do not fit readily within the role of a single member of staff. Needs to be completed within a clear timeframe and does not have a long-term duration (usually no more than one year). Recent examples include retention strategy, weekend college, technical input to the design of college timetabling incorporating community-based activity. Provides opportunities for middle managers and other staff to work outside of their normal brief and to focus upon an issue which may be new to them providing useful experience and professional development.

- **Joint Consultative Committee**

Meets termly. Forum which enables discussion and consultation to take place between



the Principal and staff representatives in matters relating to staff terms and conditions of employment, employment policy and pay setting. Two middle managers are members of the committee.

Impact

Provides a well established and on-going basis for discussion on matters relating to staff conditions of service and related matters. Minutes are available to all College staff. Minutes are also circulated to the Corporation's Personnel Committee.

- **Health and Safety Committee**

Meets termly. Representatives of staff meet with the Deputy Principal and College Health and Safety Officer to discuss health and safety issues affecting the work of the College. Minutes are available to all staff.

Impact

Provides a sound framework for overseeing the development of positive health and safety management within the College.

- **Academic Standards Committee**

Meets termly. Advises the Principal on a wide range of issues which impact upon the admission assessment and examination of students, the planning, co-ordination and development of teaching and learning across the College. Middle managers are represented on the Committee.

Impact

Provides on-going dialogue between senior managers and College staff in the drive to improve standards within the College. Minutes are available to all staff.

- **Meetings between Divisional Managers, Middle Managers and Section Teams**

Meetings take place at least termly.

Impact

Enables regular updating, discussion and planning and promotes a culture which values the contribution of a wide range of staff.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

We would be willing to share other relevant information/documentation on request.

YOUR RESPONSE TO THIS PACK

Our commitment is to respond to colleges who may wish to pursue an interest with us in using any of our ideas or information.

We are continually reviewing and modifying our management and governance capability in the clear recognition of its value in achieving better outcomes in College performance and effectiveness. Should you wish to comment upon the information contained in the pack we would be pleased to hear from you. Contact either Bryan Mitchell, project co-ordinator or Teresa Fitzgerald on 01843 605000 or Email: principal@thanet.ac.uk

