

Minutes of the Learning & Quality Committee Meeting held at 4.30pm 26 November 2025

Present: Prue Amner (temporary chair), Huw Chapman, Tim Jackson, Robbie Coates (student governor, arrived 5pm), Katy Quinn & Mike Stoneman (Teams)

Apologies: Mark Cooper, Shirley Nellthorpe & Lyndsey Mason (staff governor)

In attendance:

Chris Bilton	Deputy VP Information Services
Graham Goddard	Governor (observer)
Matt Phelps	Deputy CEO & Deputy Principal
Emily Pountney	DP Quality of Education & Digital Innovation
Paola Schweitzer	Director of Governance
Sarah Warren	VP Curriculum and Quality

Minutes

189 Attendance and Participation

Mark Cooper, Shirley Nellthorpe and Lyndsey Mason (staff governor) sent apologies.

190 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

191 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting on 22 July 2025 were **Agreed** as a correct record.

192 Matters Arising

Governors **Noted** all matters arising had been completed except for **Minute 175/167** which concerned the PFA audit anticipated in summer 2026.

193 Self-Assessment Report & Quality Improvement Plan (paper 879/25/L&Q)

Emily presented the:

- 2024-25 quality improvement plan (QIP) summarising progress at term 3
- 2024-25 draft self-assessment report (SAR) compiled using department SARs, outcomes of the 2024-25 QIP and quality improvement activities
- 2025-26 draft QIP comprising areas for improvement identified in the SAR and actions carried over from the 2024-25 QIP.

Work was ongoing to map the QIP against the new Ofsted framework. The SAR judged overall effectiveness to be *Good* with *Outstanding* features. Apprenticeship provision although improving, required further improvement. Matt highlighted the importance of proportionality in agreeing the *Good* judgement as 73% of education programmes for young people (EPYP) were *Good* or better. The QIP identified five quality improvement actions for quality of education, one action for behaviour and attitudes, two actions for personal development and four were leadership & management.

In response to a question, Emily stated that the QIP actions carried over from 2024-25 were achievable but the College needed to redouble its efforts to get to the bottom of some of the issues. Another governor asked about apprenticeships and Emily clarified that there was a separate apprenticeship action plan. There was a brief discussion about H&S practices and, having triangulated information from F&R Committee earlier in the week, governors suggested the wording in the SAR was amended. Finally, Emily confirmed that QIP targets were cascaded to staff through departmental QIPs, quality review meetings and appraisals. Governors thanked Emily for the clear, well-evidenced judgements and, having scrutinised the documents, **Agreed** to recommend the 2024-25 QIP term 3 update, 2024-25 SAR and 2025-26 QIP to Corporation for approval.

194 Quality of Education Report (paper 880/25/L&Q)

The quality of education report outlined quality improvement and assurance activities undertaken in 2025-26. Activities included the launch of *Principles of Excellence* providing a consistent set of expectations to support progress to excellence and learning coach support. Emily highlighted the more robust, intensive and time bound observation process providing interventions to drive improvement and the apprenticeships quality assurance framework that had been fully implemented and reflected in the QRM process. Governors welcomed the *Principles of Excellence*. There was a discussion about how staff members responded to *Requires Improvement* or *Inadequate* SAR grades, with Emily stating it was different for everyone but after discussion, most understood the decisions as they were underpinned by evidence. In response to a question, Emily confirmed that work readiness was threaded throughout the document and that the College's ALPS scores (measuring value add) were improving. Having reviewed the activities to progress the learning experience of students and apprentices, governors **Noted** the quality of education report.

195 L&Q Dashboard (paper 881/25/L&Q)

The L&Q dashboard outlined final performance for 2024-25 education and training, apprenticeships and attendance data as well as in year data for 2025-26. It identified underperforming courses, all of which were in the technical and vocational EPYP areas and were reflected in the QIP. There was a discussion about benchmarking and Matt stated that COPC was improving year on year and whilst achievement data was not yet published, the College was performing well against local colleges. Katy outlined the College's focus on disaggregating data by learner type to identify where further action was required. One governor expressed surprise the work experience target was so low, to which Jo responded that the College was improving year on year but had started from a low base. The College was exploring what proposed maths and English curriculum reform might mean for the College. One governor drew attention to the 2024-25 qualification achievement rates (QAR):

- Overall achievement rate: 83.1% (1.5% above 2023-24 & 2.4% below NA)
- 16-18 achievement rate: 82.2% (0.9% above 2023/24 rate & 1.2% below NA)
- 19+ achievement rate: 85.1% (2.8% above 2023/24 & 2.7% below NA)
- Overall retention: 91.4% (0.8% above 2023/24 & 0.4% below NA)
- Overall apprenticeship achievement rate: 50.5% (18.9% above 2023-24 & 11.8% below NA).

The same governor drew attention to the dashboard RAG rating the College's 24 areas of provision against the five aspects of quality of education, behaviours & attitudes, personal development, leadership & management and stakeholder engagement:

- 4 areas were rated green in all five aspects
- 14 areas were rated green in four or more aspects

- 16 areas were rated green in three or more aspects
- 17 areas were rated green in two or more aspects.

Governors **Noted** the 2024-25 and 2025-26 L&Q dashboards.

196 Student Voice Update (paper 882/25/L&Q)

The update provided information on student voice activity and outcomes, key findings from the induction survey and student voice meetings, strengths and areas for improvement in the student experience and proposed priorities and actions for 2025-26. Areas where there were high levels of satisfaction included students feeling safe and receiving good advice on learning support, areas for improvement included timetable clarity and communication around support services, IT access and enrichment. Next steps included launching a centralised SharePoint system for student feedback and actions, regular newsletters for students and parents/carers and a continued focus on inclusive representation and engagement. It was agreed that future reports would identify induction feedback data by campus. Robbie outlined Student Union (SU) activity and invited governors to attend SU meetings. One governor suggested the SU present their work to the board. Governors **Noted** the student voice update.

197 External Stakeholder Voice Update (paper 883/25/L&Q)

This update reported on progress to achieve an Ofsted *Strong* judgment in meeting local skills needs (it was currently *Reasonable*). External stakeholder engagement was embedded in curriculum planning, Employer Advisory Boards (EABs) and audits and was monitored through QRMs and stakeholder audits. Current strengths included the increasing use of employer and civic input to shape provision and improved recording and evidenced impact. Areas for development included consistency of engagement across all provision and stakeholder feedback. The College had an ambition to be the first port of call for skills and learning in the city and Katy had established and chaired an internal Business Development & External Stakeholder Group to maintain strategic oversight and drive improvement in this area. One governor asked about the College's capacity to achieve a *Strong* Ofsted judgement in relation to strategic level employer engagement, to which Katy responded that whilst great progress is being made at curriculum area level, the College had yet to really start work at a strategic level and that the Board Strategy Day on 28 January 2026 would explore this further. Matt confirmed a CRM provider had been selected and it was anticipated the system would be live for 2026-27. One governor asked why the process had taken so long and Matt explained that CRMs had different strengths and functionalities and it had taken time to agree the best system for the College as a whole. Having reviewed the progress being made to achieve a *Strong* Ofsted judgement in meeting local skills needs, governors **Noted** the external stakeholder voice update.

198 Digital Strategy (Curriculum) Update (paper 884/25/L&Q)

This report provided an update on the digital implementation plan for curriculum and student experience, summarising what was going well, work in progress and areas for development. A Head of Digital and two Digital Learning Coaches supported by a re-structured Digital Implementation Team had been appointed and the College had successfully migrated to Microsoft 365 so there was a unified digital environment and consistent blended learning model across the College. Work in progress included establishing a baseline for staff digital skills to enable targeted CPD and areas for development included strengthening consistency in the use of the unified VLE across the College and building staff confidence through training and targeted CPD. The impact of all digital activity was measured to inform investment and training. A Festival

of Innovation for staff would take place on 11 February 2026 showcasing activity across the College to which all governors are invited. Robbie reported that there had been a significant improvement at the Sixth Form Campus with new laptops and Microsoft Teams working well. In response to a question, Emily stated that Georgina was working with all curriculum teams across the College and staff were responding well. Latest JISC advice was for colleges to have robust policies integrating AI as opposed to a separate AI policy and this was currently being reviewed. There would be a Digital Spotlight session in the spring term. Governors acknowledged the significant investment in the digital infrastructure in recent years and were pleased to see the progress being made. Having reviewed and being assured of progress in implementing the digital strategy in relation to curriculum delivery and student experience, governors **Noted** the digital strategy (curriculum) update.

199 Safeguarding & Prevent Annual Report & Policy (paper 885/25/L&Q)

The safeguarding and prevent annual report provided an overview of activity in 2024-25 including data and analysis of safeguarding referrals, staff concerns and student vulnerabilities, demonstrated compliance with statutory safeguarding duties and outlined the College's responsibilities under Martyn's Law and the steps being taken to ensure compliance by April 2027. Key highlights of the report were:

- There were 1,505 safeguarding referrals. The highest categories were self-harm /suicide, mental health, substance misuse and behaviour
- 43 staff concerns were raised to LADO resulting in training, sanctions and dismissals
- The safeguarding team was strengthened with additional roles to support vulnerable cohorts
- MyConcern and Smoothwall systems were used to monitor and respond to safeguarding concerns. Smoothwall had generated 275 alerts.
- A safeguarding-focused tutorial programme significantly improved student confidence in recognising and responding to radicalisation and extremism.

There was a brief discussion about the annual statutory safeguarding training with governors believing the College needed to take a strong position with staff and governors who had not completed the training. One governor referred to the recent DBS discussions at Audit Committee and Mickiela confirmed that the framework for refreshing DBS checks would be in place in January 2026. Governors then considered the safeguarding policy which had been updated to reflect KCSIE changes. Governors **Noted** the safeguarding and prevent annual report and **Agreed** to recommend the updated safeguarding policy to Corporation for approval.

200 Careers Report including Gatsby Benchmarks (paper 886/25/L&Q)

This report provided an overview of the College's Careers Education, Advice and Guidance provision in 2024-25, outlining key activities, evaluating performance against the Gatsby Benchmarks, presenting UCAS and destination data and highlighting areas for development. UCAS data showed strong progression to HE with 87% of students securing their first-choice university placements. 2025-26 priorities included enhancing parental engagement, improving careers data tracking and refining the Aspire and Achieve programme which had been relaunched to support high-achieving students. There was a brief discussion on whether Corporation was required to agree an annual careers report. Governors **Noted** the careers report including Gatsby Benchmarks.

Following the meeting, Paola confirmed that the board was not required to agree an annual careers report (cf FE & sixth form college corporations: governance guide).

201 Staff Development Report & KPIs (paper 887/25/L&Q)

The staff development report provided an overview and impact assessment of staff development in 2024-25 as well as the focus for activity in 2025-26. The areas of focus in 2024-25 had had a positive impact as evidenced by HR metrics, lesson observations and student and staff feedback and these would continue to be developed, albeit with a different focus, in 2025-26. There was a brief discussion about the progress made under the Grow Your Own Strategy to support staff to become qualified teachers and Katy stressed the importance of being able to recruit from industry, particularly in vocational and technical areas. One governor asked how the impact of staff development activity on learners was measured and it was agreed this would be explored further in the next report. Having reviewed staff development activity in 2024-25 and priorities for 2025-26 and the impact on improving the learning experience for students and apprentices, governors **Noted** the staff development report and KPIs.

202 EED&I Annual Report & Policy (paper 888/25/L&Q)

The EED&I annual report provided an overview of the College's progress against EED&I targets and KPIs including diversity representation, recruitment and retention, attendance and professional development. Key highlights included:

- The student population was more diverse than staff and governors, and staff were more diverse than the local community in some areas but underrepresentation in disability and age remained. Governors were the least representative group with gaps in ethnicity, gender and sexual orientation.
- Attendance and achievement gaps among 16-18 learners persisted, particularly those with SEND, EHCPs, Free College Meals (FCM) eligibility and Looked After Children (LAC) status.

There was a brief discussion about the sexual orientation gap between governors and the local community whereby an increase of 0.7 of a governor was required to achieve parity. This was not a sensible increase and would therefore be removed. Governors welcomed the alignment of the EED&I Committee, targets and annual report to Ofsted's new inclusion criteria and suggested there was an inclusion link governor. Governors then considered the revised EED&I policy which had been updated to ensure it remained fit for purpose. Governors **Noted** the 2024-25 EED&I annual report and **Agreed** to recommend the EED&I Policy to Corporation for approval.

203 Freedom of Speech & External Speaker/Visitor Policy 2024-25 (paper 891/25/L&Q)

The updated Freedom of Speech & External Speaker/Visitor Policy 2024-25 ensured compliance with legislation and included contractors and commissioned services. Governors welcomed the policy and noted that it had not yet been necessary to stop any external visitors/speakers. Governors **Agreed** to recommend the Freedom of Speech & External Speaker/Visitor Policy 2024-25 to Corporation for approval.

204 Comments, Complaints & Compliments Annual Report (paper 889/25/L&Q)

This report set out comments, complaints and compliments received in 2024-25. The number of complaints decreased from the previous year (59 down from 97) due mainly to earlier intervention by the College. Most complaints originated from students and parents, with a significant number from students enrolled on Online Access courses. A more formal process for recording compliments would be developed in 2025-26. Having reviewed the types of complaints and compliments received and their resolution, governors **Noted** the comments, complaints & compliments annual report.

The meeting ended at 6.50pm. The next meeting would be 4.30pm on 11 March 2026.