

Corporation Board

Wednesday 20 May 2026, 16:30 - 18:30

Boardroom or Teams

Attendees

Board Members:

Stuart Lindeman (Chair), Lou Mycroft (Vice Chair), John Croot, Howard Freeman, Sue Martin-Standley, Jason Evans, Chantal Brown, Peter Dewhurst, Leigh McKenzie, Andrew Kelly, Nicola Beldham (Staff Governor), Lily-Anna Radford (Apprentice Governor), Amy Kingham (Student Governor)

Absent: Jill Mannion-Brunt, Jan Hemper

Attendees:

Emma Long (Observer), Jessica Shore (Head of Governance), Claire Godfrey (Deputy Principal), Tom Kidsley (CFO), Craig Acaster (AP People & Culture), Jo Down (AP Student Experience & Wellbeing), Michaela Greaves (AP Teaching, Learning & Quality Improvement)

Meeting Minutes

1. Membership

Information

The new Chair (SL) welcomed all members to the meeting and reflected on his recent engagement with governors and senior leaders as part of his induction into the new role. He noted the strength of the Board, particularly the breadth of professional expertise and the balance of strategic oversight, challenge and support, and recognised the openness and transparency of the executive team and its focus on learners. The importance of ensuring that Board discussions clearly evidence challenge and scrutiny was emphasised. The Board discussed opportunities to further strengthen engagement, including greater involvement in strategic planning and the potential for a future Board development session or away day.

Members welcomed these reflections.

The Chair introduced and welcomed the new Staff Governor - Curriculum, Emma Long, who was in attendance at the meeting as an observer, prior to formal appointment by the Board. (*Ref. Minute 9.1*)

2. Declaration of Interest

Members were reminded of the need to disclose an interest in any item of business to be considered during Part 1 of the meeting. No declarations were made for Part 1.

3. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The Part 1 minutes of the previous Corporation Board meetings held 25 March 2026 were reviewed and agreed as a true and accurate record. The review of confidential minutes is recorded under Part 2.

The action log was reviewed and there were no matters arising. Previous actions were updated and either marked as complete or carried forward as appropriate. (*Refer to Corporation Action Log – 25.3.26*)

Resolution: The Board approved the non-confidential minutes (Part 1) of the previous meeting.

4. Student & Apprentice Governor Report

The Student (AKi) and Apprentice (LR) Governors presented the Student & Apprentice Governor Report.

The Board heard that a recent student engagement session had focused on the future development of the Empower Personal Development programme. Discussion had centred on the need for a more differentiated approach across student groups, including apprentices and adult students. Proposals

included differentiated content across levels, a structured progression model and increased emphasis on reflection and critical thinking. The introduction of a student mentoring model was also discussed, whereby a designated student within each curriculum area would provide peer support.

CH: The Board queried how the mentoring model would operate in practice, including whether a pool of mentors would be established and how this would be organised across departments. It was confirmed that mentors would be identified within individual curriculum areas, ensuring that students have access to a familiar and relevant point of contact within their own department.

Further discussion took place regarding the potential impact of the mentoring model. Governors observed that the proposal would support students who may feel reluctant or lacking in confidence to approach teaching staff directly. It was also noted that this approach could reduce pressure on teaching staff by enabling peer-led support. The Board discussed the wider benefits of the model, including the development of leadership and employability skills for student mentors.

CH: The Board explored how the model would support different student groups. It was noted that apprentices can often feel less connected to the College community due to limited time spent on-site, and governors recognised that mentoring and broader engagement initiatives could help to address this. It was confirmed that the College has joined the Association of Apprentices platform to strengthen engagement and provide additional support and networking opportunities. Governors noted the potential benefits of this platform in supporting professional networking, personal development and engagement for apprentices.

The Board welcomed the report and the evident impact of student voice development, noting that the current Student and Apprentice Governors were visibly and confidently contributing at Board level. The Vice Chair (LMy) expressed appreciation for the Student and Apprentice Governors' active involvement, and also to the Assistant Principal Student Experience & Wellbeing (JD) for her support with the student voice programme and the report.

Resolution: The Board received and noted the Student & Apprentice Governor Report.

5. Staff Governor Report

The Staff Governor - Support (NB) introduced the new Staff Governor Report and invited feedback on its format and content. The Board heard that the report was based on direct engagement with staff and senior leaders, focusing on: workload and workforce transformation, staff development and CPD and staff wellbeing.

It was reported that significant work is underway to address workload pressures through standardisation and improved processes, particularly within curriculum areas. Discussion also considered staff development, including increased CPD opportunities and a structured annual programme.

CH: Governors challenged the absence of quantitative data relating to staff morale and sought clarification on how the College is able to assess overall staff experience without this, highlighting the importance of having a measurable evidence base to support assurance over time. The Assistant Principal People & Culture (CA) confirmed that recent engagement has focused more specifically on workload through targeted surveys, rather than a full staff survey. It was acknowledged that a broader survey had not been undertaken within the last 18 months and that this is being reviewed.

The Board welcomed the report and noted the importance of developing a more comprehensive approach to capturing staff voice, including the use of both qualitative and quantitative measures.

Resolution: The Board received and noted the Staff Governor Report.

6. Performance Report

The Board received the Performance Report, which included Curriculum Planning 2026/27, In-Year Headline Performance Data, Predicted Outcomes 2025/26, 2024/25 Qualification Achievement Rates, Safeguarding and Prevent, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, Quality Key Risks and Quality KPIs.

The Deputy Principal (CG) referred the Board to the full report within the papers and governors were provided with the opportunity to ask any questions. No questions were raised at this stage and the Board moved to consideration of the key focus items.

Resolution: The Board received and noted the Performance Report.

6.1. Curriculum Planning 2026/27

The Board heard that curriculum planning for 2026/27 had been completed through a structured moderation and review process, with provision aligned to local skills priorities, curriculum reform and employer demand. CG explained that detailed analysis had been undertaken to identify areas for improvement across provision, including progression rates, performance and sustainability. A strong emphasis had been placed on improving progression from lower levels, addressing identified skills gaps and improving contribution across curriculum areas. Curriculum teams had been challenged to critically review existing provision to ensure alignment with progression pathways and financial sustainability, particularly in areas where progression was limited or performance required improvement. Changes to provision, including the introduction of alternative delivery models such as STEPS 2, alongside refinement and removal of certain areas of provision, were discussed as part of this approach.

CH: The Board queried how effectively stakeholder feedback, particularly from schools and employers, is captured and integrated into curriculum planning and whether this is systematic across all areas. CG confirmed that stakeholder engagement forms part of the planning process, however, it was acknowledged that there is an opportunity to strengthen how this feedback is formally captured and utilised within the planning process.

CH: The Board challenged how progression is maintained where changes to provision have taken place, seeking assurance that students will continue to have clear and appropriate pathways. CG confirmed that progression routes are mapped across provision and are monitored, with alternative pathways in place where required.

CH: The Board queried how the College ensures responsiveness to emerging curriculum areas and changes in demand, in particular artificial intelligence (AI), and the extent to which this is being reflected within curriculum planning to ensure students are equipped with relevant skills for a rapidly changing technological environment. CG confirmed that curriculum planning takes account of emerging industry trends, including developments in AI, and that work is ongoing to ensure provision remains relevant and responsive to future skills requirements.

The Board and Principal (JR) commended CG and the curriculum teams for producing such a thorough and efficient curriculum plan, which not only is driving the financial KPIs and benchmarks, but more importantly, is meeting so many of the strategic priorities and local needs. Specific thanks were recorded for CG, TK and the Head of MIS, alongside many other staff across the organisation, for the tremendous amount of work that goes into the curriculum planning and budget process.

6.2. Predicted Outcomes 2025/26

The Board heard that predicted outcomes indicate continued year-on-year improvement, with expectations of increased achievement rates across provision. CG highlighted that improving pass rates and securing consistent performance across curriculum areas remain key priorities. Discussion focused in detail on in-year performance indicators, particularly attendance, retention and progression. Attendance, especially in GCSE English and maths, was identified as an ongoing concern.

CG advised that targeted interventions are in place, including one-to-one support for students, and that a renewed focus on expectations, including clearer communication and visibility of attendance expectations within classrooms, is planned for the next academic year.

CH: Governors expressed concern regarding attendance, particularly in GCSE English and maths, and questioned whether attendance reflects issues specific to the College or wider sector challenges and sought clarity on how much influence the College has over this and how effectively it is being managed. CG confirmed that attendance challenges are consistent across the sector and are influenced by underlying factors, including increasing mental health challenges and a greater proportion of disadvantaged students. It was also noted that at this stage of the academic year, focus shifts from improving attendance rates to supporting achievement and completion.

CH: The Board queried how effectively interventions are targeted, how patterns are identified and how the impact of interventions is measured. CG confirmed that targeted interventions are in place, with monitoring through ongoing performance review processes, focusing on those learners most at risk of underachievement.

Discussion also considered apprenticeship performance and progression.

CH: Governors challenged apprenticeship withdrawals and sought clarity on the underlying causes, including whether issues relate to employer engagement, programme design or student expectations. CG confirmed that withdrawals have been analysed and are often linked to employer-related factors or misalignment of expectations rather than systemic weaknesses in provision.

CH: The Board queried progression into apprenticeships, noting variability across curriculum areas and seeking assurance that pathways are sufficiently clear and accessible for students. CG confirmed that progression into apprenticeships remains variable and is an area for continued development, with work underway to strengthen pathways and improve clarity. Governors noted the importance of strengthening progression routes into apprenticeships as part of the wider curriculum strategy.

6.3. Ofsted and Inspection Readiness

The Assistant Principal Teaching, Learning & Quality Improvement (MG) provided an update on inspection readiness and emerging national themes. The Board heard that preparation activity is ongoing, with a focus on ensuring consistency of student experience across provision and embedding key priorities within teaching, learning and assessment. Discussion also reflected wider national inspection trends, including an increased focus on inclusion and learner progress.

CH: Governors queried confidence in articulating the College's inclusion strategy during inspection. MG confirmed that inclusion is embedded across College activity and forms a core element of inspection readiness, supported through ongoing development and quality processes.

6.4. Safeguarding Policy Family (including Online Safety)

The Board received the updated Safeguarding and Online Safety policies for approval, alongside the policy cover report which provided a full overview of the changes. The Assistant Principal Student Experience & Wellbeing (JD) confirmed that the policies had been reviewed as part of the annual update cycle and updated to reflect current statutory guidance and best practice. It was noted that the revisions were primarily technical in nature, with a focus on strengthening clarity around roles, responsibilities and processes. The Board was advised that the policies had been subject to legal review to ensure compliance and a robust approach to managing sensitive issues. The policies had also received scrutiny and prior-approval from the Safeguarding Committee. Governors noted that they appreciated the tracked changes within the full policy documents to clearly see the changes made.

CH: The Board noted that governors were not explicitly referenced within one section of the Online Safety Policy and queried whether governance responsibilities were sufficiently clear within the document. JD

Decision

confirmed that this was an omission and that the policy would be updated to explicitly reflect the role of governors. **Action: JD to amend the Online Safety Policy to explicitly reflect the role of governors.**

The Board considered the policies and confirmed that they were satisfied with the updates.

Resolution: The Board **approved** the Safeguarding and Online Safety policies.

7. Finance & Corporate Services Report

The Board received the Finance & Corporate Services Report, which included Period 8 Management Accounts, Year-End Position 2025/26, Financial Planning and Draft Budget 2026/27 Overview, Transformation Fund Sub-Committee Update and Risk Overview.

The Chief Finance Officer (TK) referred the Board to the full report and governors were provided with the opportunity to raise any questions. No questions were raised at this stage and the Board moved to consideration of the key focus update.

Resolution: The Board received and noted the Finance & Corporate Services Report.

7.1. Period 8 Management Accounts & Year-End Position 2025/26

Decision

The Board heard that financial performance is ahead of plan, with EBITDA forecast to exceed the original budget expectations. TK explained that this position reflects a combination of stable income and tight control of expenditure, which has allowed the College to outperform initial expectations for the year. The Board was advised that the forecast year-end position continues to reflect this positive position, although it remains subject to the usual uncertainties associated with the final period of the financial year. TK emphasised that, whilst performance is currently strong, this should be viewed within the wider context of financial volatility and external pressures on the sector.

CH: The Board welcomed the strong in-year position and year-end forecast but challenged the extent to which this performance reflects sustainable improvement rather than short-term factors. Governors queried how much of the current position is dependent on favourable conditions, including recruitment and cost variances, and sought assurance that the College is not becoming reliant on factors that may not continue in future years. TK confirmed that, whilst performance is strong, it is important not to assume that this position will automatically continue. TK reinforced that the College operates within a funding environment that is inherently uncertain, and that there are a number of external dependencies, including funding rates, policy changes and cost inflation, which can significantly impact performance. The importance of maintaining a cautious and disciplined approach to financial management was emphasised.

CH: Governors queried how the College's financial performance compares to sector benchmarks, particularly in relation to staff costs and efficiency, and sought assurance that performance remains competitive. TK confirmed that benchmarking is undertaken, however, variation exists across the sector due to differing curriculum models and organisational structures. It was noted that managing staff costs remains a key focus area.

The Board noted the robustness of current financial performance alongside the need for continued prudence.

Resolution: The Board **approved** the Period 8 Management Accounts.

7.2. Financial Planning & Draft Budget 2026/27 Overview

TK provided a detailed overview of the wider financial context and forward-planning considerations. The Board heard that, despite the strong current performance, the longer-term outlook presents increasing challenges. TK explained that funding increases remain limited, demographic growth is driving income rather than real funding uplift and cost pressures, particularly staffing and pay, continue to increase. It was emphasised that the College's financial position is highly sensitive to relatively small changes in key

assumptions. Scenario modelling had been undertaken to demonstrate how different variables, including recruitment levels, pay increases and funding changes, could affect the College's financial trajectory.

CH: The Board discussed the level of uncertainty within financial planning and challenged the extent to which future financial sustainability is dependent on external factors outside of the College's control, querying how confident it can be in its longer-term financial planning. Governors observed that, while current performance is strong, the modelling suggests increasing pressure over time and sought assurance that sufficient contingencies are in place. TK confirmed that financial planning is based on assumptions and requires flexibility in response to changing external conditions. The College mitigates this through scenario modelling and by maintaining flexibility in its planning assumptions, allowing it to respond to changes as they arise. The importance of maintaining a strong financial position in the short term to provide resilience for future uncertainty was highlighted.

CH: The Board explored the impact of pay pressures in more detail, questioning how the College intends to balance the need to remain competitive in staff recruitment and retention with the need to maintain financial sustainability. TK confirmed that pay is one of the most significant pressures within the financial model and is a key factor in planning. It was acknowledged that this requires careful balancing, with ongoing consideration of affordability alongside workforce needs.

CH: The Board also questioned how strategic decisions may need to change in response to the longer-term financial outlook, including whether different approaches to growth, delivery or investment may be required. TK acknowledged that longer-term planning will require continued focus on efficiency, prioritisation and careful decision-making regarding investment and development.

The Board recognised that, whilst the current financial position is strong, the outlook requires a cautious and forward-looking approach.

8. Corporate Report

The Board received the Corporate Report, which included updates on the national policy context, qualification reform, LSIP engagement and strategic partnerships, as well as Corporate key risks, health & safety updates, in-year KPI update and Green Skills & Climate Road Map progress. The Principal (JR) referred the Board to the report and invited questions. Discussion focused on key themes arising from the report.

CH: The Board discussed developments in qualification reform, noting the pace and scale of change and the level of uncertainty within the national landscape. Consideration was given to the implications for planning and delivery, including the challenges associated with responding to evolving policy direction. JR confirmed that uncertainty remains at a national level and that this creates challenges for planning; however, the College continues to monitor developments and respond as further clarity is provided.

CH: Governors also discussed engagement with the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP), including the extent to which it is supporting meaningful employer engagement and informing curriculum planning. JR confirmed that engagement through the LSIP has been limited and that the College continues to undertake its own employer engagement activity to support this work.

CH: The Board further discussed the need for greater visibility of strategic partnerships and how these contribute to organisational priorities. It was agreed that further detail on partnerships would be brought to a future meeting.

Action: A future update on strategic partnerships and their impact to be provided to the Board.

Resolution: The Board received and noted the Corporate Report.

9. Governance Report

The Head of Governance presented the Governance Report, which provided an overview of key governance activities since the previous meeting. In addition, the following information was also provided as standing items: In-Year Corporation & Committee Meeting Attendance (Governance KPI), Written Resolutions/Chair's Actions, Ratified Committee Minutes and Committee Policy Approvals.

In addition to the standing items, the Board also received information and updates regarding governor membership and vacancies, Link Governor engagement and feedback from the recent termly visit which focused on Inclusive Learning, as well as the '*Creative Approaches to Governance*' journal from the College Action Inquiry Research Network.

Resolution: The Board received and noted the Governance Report.

9.1. Staff Governor (Curriculum) Appointment

Decision

Following the outcome of the recent staff nomination and election process, the Board were asked to formally appoint the new Staff Governor for Curriculum, Emma Long.

Resolution: The Board **approved** the appointment of Emma Long for the Staff Governor - Curriculum position.

10. Statutory Reporting & Lead Governor Updates

Information

Lead Governors / SMT Lead

The Board received the latest Lead Governor Reports, including Safeguarding and SEND. No further discussion or challenge was raised by the Board.

Resolution: The Board received and noted the Lead Governor Reports.

11. Confidential Items

Confidential items are minuted under Part 2.

12. Meeting Reflection & Continuous Board Improvement

The Board undertook a reflection on the meeting, with discussion focused on the quality of strategic discussion, the level of challenge and engagement and the effectiveness of Board dynamics. Governors reflected positively on the depth of discussion and the focus on key strategic issues.

13. Date of Next Meeting

Information

1 July 2026.

Part 1 of the meeting concluded.

The Staff, Student and Apprentice Governors withdrew from the meeting prior to confidential part 2.

Shore, Jessica
09/09/2026 11:21:10