

**Quality and Standards Committee**  
**Minutes of the Meeting held on Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> March 2026 at 4:30 PM**  
**Location:** Board Room, Kingsway, Widnes, Cheshire

<b>Present:</b>	Katie Anderson	External Governor
	Michele Bacon	External Governor
	Rachael Owen	External Governor, Chair
	Tom McInerney	External Governor
	Steph Power	Staff Governor

<b>In Attendance:</b>	Ben Barton	Vice Principal (Head of Riverside)
	Alan Brown	Deputy Principal (Curriculum & Quality)
	Donna Elston	Head of Student Services
	Jacqui Scott	Head of Teaching, Learning & Standards
	Catherine Shaw	Head of Governance

## 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

**Resolved:** Apologies for absence were received and accepted for Oscar Lam and Carrolly Torres (Student Governors).

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## 2. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

No new declarations were made in addition to those recorded in the Register of Interests maintained by the Head of Governance.

**Resolved:** The Committee noted the report.

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## 3. MINUTES

3.1 **To approve the minutes of the meeting held on 25<sup>th</sup> November 2025** (*previously circulated*)

**Resolved:** The minutes of the previous meeting were approved as a true and accurate record.

3.2 **To receive a progress report on any matters arising from the previous meeting**

**Resolved:** The Committee noted the action log and agreed that the theme of the curriculum presentation to be delivered at its next meeting was 'Examination Access Requirements.'

### 3.2.1 HE Freedom of Speech Regulations

The Head of HE presented an update on Higher Education Freedom of Speech requirements, noting that the legislation largely formalised existing practice. It was confirmed that appropriate policies and procedures were in place, particularly in relation to external speakers, teaching and assessment. The requirement was to take reasonable steps to uphold lawful freedom of speech while balancing safeguarding requirements and duties relating to the prevention of harassment. Staff training and student awareness activity sessions were planned. The Committee was assured that no significant issues have arisen to date and practice continued to be closely monitored.

The subsequent discussion centred on the situations in which the regulations were most likely to arise and the importance of staff confidence in managing potentially controversial views.

**Resolved:** The Committee noted the report.

*The Head of HE was thanked for his report and he left the meeting.*

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## 4. TERMLY CURRICULUM PRESENTATION

The Head of Teaching and Learning Standards (TLS) delivered a presentation on the College's 'Great Teaching' approach. This approach provided a coaching-led, evidence-informed framework to support continuous improvement in teaching practice. It was explained that the model focused on professional growth rather than judgement, using specialist and peer coaches to build staff confidence, encourage reflective practice and embed effective teaching strategies over time. Governors discussed the importance of trust, staff engagement and consistency, and were assured that any performance concerns were managed separately through formal quality and HR processes.

**Resolved:** The Committee noted the presentation and the positive impact on teaching culture.

*The Head of TLS was thanked for her informative presentation, and she left the meeting.*

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## 5. STUDENT SUPPORT

### 5.1 Safeguarding (previously circulated)

The Head of Student Services presented an update to the Committee on safeguarding matters. Governors were advised of a continued increase in safeguarding activity, particularly in connection with issues relating to mental health, self-harm, online abuse, sexual abuse and domestic abuse. The Committee was advised that the nature of concerns reflected wider national trends and increasing case complexity. Governors questioned how capacity was being managed in the context of rising demand, level of parental engagement and the balance between safeguarding intervention and promoting learner independence. The Committee received assurance that (i) robust processes remained in place for the identification of concerns, (ii) effective escalation to multi-agency involvement took place where required, (iii) that staff were

appropriately trained and supported, and (iv) safeguarding concerns were acted upon promptly, with arrangements kept under close review.

**Resolved:** The Committee noted the report.

## 5.2 Wellbeing and Enrichment Activities *(previously circulated)*

The Committee received an update on wellbeing and enrichment activity and was advised that student engagement continued to be strong, with enrichment playing an increasingly important role in supporting mental health, resilience and a sense of belonging. A range of student-led and targeted activities were highlighted, including wellbeing events, fundraising initiatives and enrichment opportunities shaped directly by learner feedback; examples of the latter were provided. College managers responded directly to student feedback and engagement through surveys, student representatives and leadership forums, resulting in activities that reflected learner interests and wellbeing needs.

It was noted that participation had increased across the campuses and that enrichment was being used strategically to both support vulnerable learners and complement safeguarding interventions. Governors welcomed the positive impact on the learner experience and were assured that enrichment activity was aligned with wider wellbeing and safeguarding priorities.

**Resolved:** The Committee noted the report.

*The Head of Student Services/Designated Safeguarding Lead was thanked for her reports, and she left the meeting.*

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## 6. CURRICULUM AND FUNDING

### 6.1 Local Skills Duty to Review – Working Group *(previously circulated)*

The draft minutes from the meeting held on 15<sup>th</sup> January 2026 were considered by the Committee. A further update was provided by the Vice Principal (Head of Centre, Riverside) and a discussion ensued which encompassed:

- The importance of aligning curriculum planning with local and regional skills priorities.
- The value of employer engagement and clarity around impact.
- The need for continued monitoring as national policy develops.

**Resolved:** The Committee noted the contents of the report and that the next meeting was scheduled to take place on 6<sup>th</sup> May 2026.

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## 7. QUALITY ASSURANCE

### 7.1 Learner Voice – Have Your Say Survey *(previously circulated)*

The Deputy Principal presented the Learner Voice report, from which the following key points were highlighted:

- 3,337 student responses were received, representing strong engagement.

- Safeguarding-related responses were monitored daily, with immediate follow-up where concerns were raised.
- Overall satisfaction remained strong, though a decline was noted in feedback regarding examination preparation, particularly within A-level provision.

An in-depth discussion took place. Governors requested additional information regarding survey outcomes from A Level students, specific to where indicators showed a decline in satisfaction rates. In response, the Deputy Principal advised that the focus group with student representatives had not identified corresponding concerns. The Committee was advised that some issues may reflect pressure points within the campuses and the challenge of students studying multiple subjects. Governors emphasised the importance of ensuring that examination preparation remained embedded across all college provision where examinations were a course requirement. The Committee received assurance that the position would be monitored closely through 'Have Your Say Two' to inform the emergence of any trends.

**Resolved:** The Committee noted the report.

## 7.2 To receive a report on areas subject to the College's special measures and close monitoring processes (*previously circulated*)

The Deputy Principal presented this report which focussed on a small number of curriculum areas subject to close monitoring or special measures. He explained the proportionate, evidence-led approach that was in place to improve outcomes. The Committee was advised that only a minority of provision was subject to enhanced scrutiny, with decisions informed by factors such as performance data, staffing capacity, leadership stability and learner experience. The Committee received assurance that reviews took place regularly. Progress was reported in areas where leadership and structural changes had strengthened provision, while it was acknowledged that some improvements would take time to embed fully. Governors questioned whether learners could be disadvantaged and whether there was a risk of complacency in otherwise strong provision. The Deputy Principal confirmed that additional oversight and support were in place to mitigate risk, that even small declines were taken seriously, and that learner impact remained the primary consideration.

**Resolved:** The Committee noted the contents of the report.

## 7.3 Complaints and Compliments (*previously circulated*)

The Committee received the report on complaints and compliments and was advised that no formal complaints had been escalated during the reporting period, with concerns generally resolved at an early stage. The Deputy Principal highlighted a change in the nature of correspondence, including an increase in lengthy, regulation-heavy and occasionally anonymous complaints. This was often linked to social media or AI generated correspondence, which could place additional pressure on staff time. It was confirmed that the College did not investigate social media content directly and instead followed appropriate safeguarding, disciplinary or external referral routes where necessary, maintaining clear boundaries where behaviour became unreasonable. Governors noted the evolving complaints landscape and were assured that early engagement and robust processes remained in place.

**Resolved:** The Committee noted the report.

#### 7.4 Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Link Governor Report

The Committee received a verbal update from the SEND Link Governor following a recent visit to CRMz, where positive progress was reported in learner engagement, staff confidence and the learning environment, with students able to articulate their activities and next steps. Ongoing development of facilities and vocational opportunities were noted, alongside discussion of emerging national SEND reforms, including proposed changes to Education, Health Care Plans (EHCP) processes and responsibilities. Attention was also drawn to the importance of post-programme pathways for learners transitioning into adulthood and the need for effective partnership working in an increasingly complex SEND landscape.

Governors sought clarification on post-programme pathways for learners leaving specialist provision, particularly the availability of appropriate adult or community options, alongside the potential implications of emerging national SEND reforms on EHCP processes and responsibilities. Clarification was also requested on the impact of external and private SEND providers operating locally, including any effect on learner profiles, funding arrangements and partnership working.

**Resolved:** The Committee noted the report.

#### 7.5 Safeguarding Link Governor Report

The Safeguarding Link Governor provided an update on safeguarding activity. He provided assurance regarding the robustness of safeguarding arrangements, the responsiveness of staff, and the effectiveness of reporting and escalation processes.

**Resolved:** The Committee noted the report.

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### 8. MONITORING OF KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

#### 8.1 Attendance, Retention, Enrolments and Suspensions (*previously circulated*)

The Committee reviewed the key performance indicators for attendance and retention and was advised that overall performance remained strong and stable. Attendance was reported to be holding at around 90%, consistent with the same point in the previous year, and retention remained positive across most areas of provision. The Deputy Principal responded to several questions raised. He highlighted that performance was monitored on a point-in-time basis to allow meaningful year-on-year comparison and that variations by programme type were expected, particularly in more volatile entry-level provision. Governors were assured that any emerging trends were subject to close review.

**Resolved:** The Committee

- noted the report
- requested that the latest suspension data report be circulated

## 8.2 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) *(previously circulated)*

The Committee reviewed EDI performance alongside key performance indicators and was advised that retention remained strong across protected and vulnerable learner groups, with gaps narrowing rather than widening. Positive outcomes were reported for learners from minority ethnic backgrounds and those with high needs, reflecting the impact of targeted pastoral support, while some variation by programme type was noted. Governors sought clarification on behaviour and exclusions data for vulnerable groups and were assured that this analysis was being strengthened and that EDI performance continued to be monitored closely,

**Resolved:** The Committee noted the report.

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## 9. FE SECTOR UPDATES

**Schools White Paper and Consultation on SEND** *(previously circulated)*

**Resolved:** The Committee noted the contents of the report.

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## 10. POLICIES

10.1 **Learner Involvement Policy** *(previously circulated)*

The Committee reviewed the Learner Involvement Policy and was advised that it reflects current practice and provided an appropriate framework for engaging learners through surveys, student representatives and other learner voice mechanisms. Governors received assurance that learner involvement was embedded effectively across the College. No concerns were raised.

**Resolved:** The Committee recommended the approval of the Learner Involvement Policy to the Board.

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## 11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

None.

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## 12. ITEMS TO BE REPORTED TO THE BOARD

**Resolved:** The Committee approved the items to be reported to the Board at its meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2026.

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## 13. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

**Resolved:** The Committee noted that the next Quality and Standards Committee meeting was to take place on 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2026.

The Chair thanked attendees for their participation and the meeting was closed.

Signed.....Office copy signed by Rachael Owen.....

**Committee Chair**

Date...23<sup>rd</sup> June 2026.....