

**MINUTES OF LEARNING & QUALITY COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD ON MONDAY 27TH NOVEMBER 2025
A339, WISEMORE CAMPUS**

Members:

Mary Mahoney
Adam Comery
Paul Averis – minutes 56 to 120
Barbara Van Der Eecken (Chair)
Precious Itota – minutes 56 to 118
Heather Lodge
Edward Ng – minutes 56 to 120
David Wheeler – minutes 56 to 114

In Attendance:

Kirsti Lord, Deputy Principal Curriculum, Innovation & Student Success
Lesley Venables, Head of Governance
James Norris, Assistant Principal Adults & WBL
David Turner, Assistant Principal Quality Directors of Faculty – Mark Pemberton, Jo Thomas, Geeta Bhucher, Rachael Smith and Rachel Davies

Governors and staff gave their consent to the meeting being recorded.

	Apologies for Absence	
56	Apologies for absence were received from Jat Sharma and Yolanda Ndlovu.	
	Declarations of Interest	
57	There were no declarations of interest in any agenda item.	
	MINUTES	
58	Resolved - That the minutes of the meeting held on 13 rd October 2025 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair	
	MATTERS ARISING	
59	Governors received an updated report on progress against previous recommendations.	
60	In relation to minute 126 on A Levels the DP advised that any decisions on the future of this area of provision needed to be tailored to student needs and based on the Government's Curriculum Reforms, particularly in comparison against the new V Levels (details of which had not yet been published).	
61	For Achieving Together (minute 130) an options appraisal had been undertaken but further discussion was required at SMT prior to submitting this to the Committee for consideration and recommendation to the Corporation.	KL
62	A governor commented that they were unclear on the intent of the curriculum reviews and the respective comparisons that were being undertaken. The Deputy Principal responded that the College was assessing options for an equivalent, relevant offer at Level 3 and whether A Levels were the most appropriate qualification for future applicants. For example, A Level Science had under-recruited for the last 3 years and had poor levels of achievement.	
63	It was vital that a decision on Level 3 provision for 2026/2027 was made shortly as the College needed to advertise its courses to potential learners in the New Year. A governor added that it was possible that the College could be an attractive alternative to students who would not meet the entry criteria for a traditional sixth form college.	
64	All remaining items had either been completed, superseded or were featured on the agenda. It was agreed that an additional meeting would be arranged for early December to discuss Achieving Together and that items identified for future meetings	KL/LV

	would be included in the Committee's business plan (e.g., Quality Development Coaches session at the February meeting).	
QUALITY ASSURANCE & PERFORMANCE DATA		
65	The Deputy Principal presented a detailed report on Quality Assurance and performance data for 2025/2026.	
66	Attendance was currently at 83.6% overall, which was 2% lower than the same point in 2024/2025 and was a particular concern at Entry and Level 1, which had seen a significant increase in enrolments this year. This issue was a key focus of staff's attention and governors were informed of the multiple strategies being employed to improve performance, overseen by the Attendance Working Group. It was felt that some staff had not withdrawn students in a timely manner despite them not attending for a few weeks, which would impact the figures.	
67	The Committee noted that there had been a significant amount of re-timetabling to accommodate students requiring a lower than planned level, which had caused some disruption for students, combined with staffing challenges in maths and English and Student Support Officer recruitment.	
68	A series of Course Performance Meetings were underway and, due to the direct correlation between attendance and achievement for 2024/2025, CPMs were focussing on areas with low attendance to date, which had led to a high number of Entry, Level 1 and Community courses being placed with the CPM process.	
69	A governor questioned whether staff were aware of the underlying reasons for non-attendance and was advised that this was part of the remit of the Working Group. Data was analysed according to protected characteristic and disadvantage criteria to tailor strategies designed to maximise student attendance.	
70	The Committee was informed of the attendance measures in place in secondary schools, whereby leaders had been asked to focus on students with an attendance level of 85 to 90% and to take a pragmatic approach. The AP Adults & WBL commented that the College needed to continue to push for closer liaison with the local authority in terms of transition information, so that it could support students better and plan more effectively by understanding students' starting points.	
71	Governors emphasised the importance of the "Swap - Don't Drop" initiative, which enabled transfers between courses, but also acknowledged that for some individuals studying at the College was not appropriate and should be guided to alternative provision.	
72	Management felt that there was still a level of 'in-College truancy' and this was now easier to track and tackle through walkaround and security checks as a result of the new College barrier system.	
73	Retention for 16-18s was currently 98.4%, which was 1.2 percentage points higher than in December 2024, although this position may reduce by R04 (5 December) which is the most accurate comparator date. Retention for both the adult and apprenticeship cohorts remained variable as it depended on the number of starts during the year, whereas the majority of 16-18s enrolled in September.	
74	Retention and attendance remained essential to improving achievement rates for 16-18 provision and were one of the main areas for improvement in the Executive QIP, together with Level 3 achievement rates for both 16-18 and adults. The College's	

75	<p>aspiration was to work towards 'outstanding' ('Exceptional' on the new Ofsted framework), which meant that it would need to be above the respective benchmarks by at least 3-4% by the next likely inspection date in 2028/2029.</p> <p>Quality Development Coaches were now being deployed to support staff both in formal training sessions and on an individual basis as themes were identified via learning walks throughout the year; developmental and unseen observations were underway. The purpose was for training to be more targeted, to generate a more reflective practice and identify areas for development to support teaching, learning and assessment.</p>	KL/DT
76	<p>KPIs at a granular level had been agreed with each curriculum area, which would contribute to the overall College KPIs for 2025/2026. These had been negotiated and agreed at Quality Review meetings and the respective QIPs had been written to identify actions to achieve these KPIs. Progress against QIP actions would be tracked throughout the year and any emerging themes reported to future Committee meetings.</p>	
SELF-ASSESSMENT REPORT FOR 2024/2025 & QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN FOR 2025/2026		
77	<p>Each of the Faculty Directors presented their draft SAR/QIP, with the following points highlighted:</p>	
78	<p>V6 A mix of grades across curriculum areas - Early Years, Health Services & Social Care – grade 2. High levels of performance in Travel & Tourism (the smallest area) over the last academic year - overall outcomes are 11% above national averages with positive student behaviour and attendance levels and high value sets amongst staff and students.</p>	
79	<p>There was a variety of strategies in place to address attendance with a consistence approach to tiered interventions. The focus for this term had been parental interventions and support to students at risk.</p>	
80	<p>Some resistance to the new staffing structure had been apparent and there was further work to be undertaken to ensure that lecturers take responsibility for following up non-attendance and progress.</p>	
81	<p>Changes to timetabling had been made in line with needs of students, which was now having an impact on attendance levels. Accurate attendance data had enabled managers to drill down to individual lecturer level and have some difficult discussions based on evidence. There had been staffing challenges at the start of the year, with gaps for 2 curriculum managers, which were now resolved.</p>	
82	<p>Overall vocational achievement rates varied across the faculty, partly due to changes in qualifications and an increase in examinations. Workforce development activities now focused on revision techniques and supporting students with independent learning outside the classroom.</p>	
83	<p>Governors noted that A Levels would be reviewed as part of the curriculum planning process that would start shortly. The Business and Law A levels had already been remodelled to reflect the difference in pedagogy that was required in year one compared to year two and should improve the transition for students.</p>	

84	<p>The Sports curriculum was now under new leadership and combined with Public Services. Previously there had been a lack of effective monitoring and tracking of students particularly at Level 3, which had led to poor achievement rates. A review of additional learning aims had also taken place to ensure that students were not over-burdened and distracted from their main qualification.</p>	
85	<p>Schemes of work had been redrafted, together with the sequencing of learning and exam units. Learning outcomes had been mapped against specific staff skills to maximise the effectiveness of the curriculum for each of those. Staff from high-performing courses across the faculty were supporting their peers.</p>	
86	<p>Progression pathways for Business, Law and Hospitality were under review, especially from Level 2 to Level 3. Further staff development was required on assessment feedback and internal verification/standardisation and was being addressed by the new Curriculum Manager who had extensive experience of quality within FE.</p>	
87	<p>STEAM Governors were advised that Engineering continued to be a concern but that, following recent management changes, the department was now more settled. Computing and Digital were performing strongly and had been amalgamated with Science. Work was underway in Science on IAG and course design.</p>	
88	<p>A target had been set to increase attendance by 2% in 2025/2026, which was currently lower (84%) and reflected the high proportion of students with safeguarding/wellbeing concerns. Management felt that some students with poor attendance had not been withdrawn and were impacting on retention rates in the longer term. Staff were now clear on the respective responsibilities of lecturers and Student Support Officers in terms of attendance monitoring.</p>	
89	<p>A further target in the QIP was to increase achievement for vocational 16 to 18 courses by 2%. Changes had been made to the design of the curriculum last year, such as Level 1 Engineering (which had been condensed and focused on employability) and the removal of A Level Science from the current offer (replaced by a BTEC qualification).</p>	
90	<p>There was evidence that some ESOL students enrolling on Levels 2 and 3 Construction programmes required a 'bridging' qualification, which was being discussed with the Director of Adults & Community Learning.</p>	
91	<p>The faculty was aiming to expand its Construction offer once there were suitable progression routes and an improvement in achievement. There was a significant proportion of students on Level 3 programmes that required GCSE English and maths resits, which had impacted on both attendance and achievements levels. The curriculum had been redesigned to provide smaller Level 2 qualifications to enable students to progress to Level 3 and achieve their career goals.</p>	
92	<p>It was difficult to find appropriate work experience opportunities, with some notable exceptions such as the Ibstock Brickwork Academy. The current changes to the College's MIS meant that supporting data on work experience and its impact on students was not yet available.</p>	

93	<p>Adult & Community Learning</p> <p>The Director of Faculty set out the current self-assessment grades for Adult & Community Learning. Governors noted the variations such as grade 1 for ESOL, Community Learning and Teacher Education to grade 2 for Distance Learning (where achievement had reduced in 2024/2025) and grade 3 for Professional Services</p>	
94	<p>Management aimed to improve the overall attendance rate from 81% to 85% (compared to the overall College target of 83% for 2025/2026), which was felt to be realistic following discussions at the recent Quality Review meetings. A series of measures had already been implemented, including sharing these high expectations with learners right at the start of their courses and outlining the support available to enable students to achieve the target.</p>	
95	<p>Learning walkthroughs were being used to monitor learners' attendance and progress in the classroom, together with the impact of any interventions and identifying any potential barriers to success. Managers were being asked to ensure that registers were marked and students withdrawn in a timely manner to provide an accurate picture. Attendance monitoring was a particular focus and started after the first absence. Evidence for bursary applications was requested as early as possible to improve processing times.</p>	
96	<p>Improving retention and achievement of higher-level learners was a further area for development. Early interventions were being implemented to support students in employment. Learners enrolling in January would be assessed for prior attainment and, if appropriate, would be supported to prepare them for the September intake.</p>	
97	<p>Achievement rates in distance learning had decreased in 2024/2025 to 88%, which was partly due to factors outside of the College's control, and would be a major focus for staff in 2025/2026. The design of the curriculum and the delivery methods were being reviewed, together with staff capabilities and capacities.</p>	
98	<p>As outlined earlier, progression pathways were currently insufficient and should fulfil the needs of the full range of learners, but this would take a considerable time to implement and embed. The College needed to be more agile and flexible in future, particularly with the new Lifelong Learning Entitlement and the opening of the Adult Learning Centre from 2027.</p>	
99	<p>SEND & Inclusion</p> <p>The Committee noted the self-assessment of performance within the SAR for 2024/2025, including a grade 1 for Supported Learning provision (in line with the November 2024 Ofsted grading).</p>	
100	<p>The College's 14-16 provision (Achieving Together) had been graded separately this time and the post-16 offer was now known as "Activate". Attendance and progression (75 to 80%) had been strong for this area, especially when considering the starting points for the majority of learners and their educational backgrounds, with students continuing to positive destinations.</p>	
101	<p>However, post-16 provision had been assessed as 'requires improvement', with poor levels of attendance, retention and achievement.</p>	
102	<p>New leadership of ESOL had led to strengthened processes and curriculum. This was a complex cohort of learners, with a significant amount of care experienced young people and unaccompanied minors which brought particular challenges</p>	

103	Achievement and retention rates for post-16 Achieving Together students was too low in 2024/2025 and the programme had now been reviewed and relaunched in September 2025. Targets had been set to increase attendance, retention and achievement by 5% in 2025/2026. Further support would be provided through the SSO that had recently been appointed for the 14-16 cohort to better prepare progressors from this provision in future.	
104	Levels of achievement for English Level 1 and GCSE in Supported Learning needed to improve, but Entry Level achievements were strong. This part of the faculty was supported by 45 teaching staff with a team leader structure in place and a reallocation of responsibilities to balance the caseload.	
105	From the overall cohort of 280 students around 30 would be undertaking GCSEs. This meant that the examination results of a small number of students could have a significant impact on the overall achievement level. Activities outside of the main qualification aim had been removed to allow more focus on the core programme. This also enabled skills to be embedded and student confidence to be developed, with the ability to devote more time to maths and English if necessary.	
106	A further area for improvement was to work with more learners in securing supported internships to gain paid employment (raising this from 8% of the total national adult workforce). This would be partly achieved through a new collaboration with Whitbread Premier Inns and Hereward College which guaranteed students jobs in the hospitality sector at the end of the programme.	
107	<p>Apprenticeships & Work-Based Learning</p> <p>Although achievement levels on B81 and B93 had improved by about 10 percentage points in 2024/2025 it was recognised that there was still a great deal of work to be done to turn these areas around. All other departments had achievement rates of between 73 and 75%, which was above the national average.</p>	
108	Positive relationships continued to be maintained and formed in terms of meeting the skills needs of local employers, providing a responsive and agile solution to training requirements. The faculty was working to ensure that all different funding streams were maximised.	
109	Staff performance monitoring was now fully embedded and effective, enabling a focus on incremental milestones. This would be reinforced further in 2025/2026 through staff training. There had been some staffing challenges over the past few months, which had been partly resolved by buying in core hours from the STEAM faculty. The previous dependence on agency staffing had also been reduced.	
110	Interventions for students were relatively low compared to other College programmes, but it was encouraging that there had been an increase in self-declarations over the past year. Support for learners would continue to be a high priority in 2025/2026, particularly those with an EHCP, to unlock any barriers to learning.	
111	The new tracking system (Aptem) should enable staff to monitor compliance against funding requirements more effectively and in a more automated manner.	
112	Currently the overall apprenticeship attendance rate was inconsistent, particularly for Level 3 Team Leader and Level 5 Operations Manager programmes. The directorate's attendance target was to increase from 85% to 89% in 2025/2026. Detailed monitoring was possible through Power BI tools. Staff would be working to	

	ensure that appropriate interventions were implemented to address any attendance issues and that the relevant policy was consistently applied.	
113	Compliance with Off the Job Training regulations was important including ensuring that the appropriate evidence was available to support any funding claims. This was now a standing agenda item for all team meetings.	
114	The number of adult apprentices who had passed their planned end date had reduced significantly year on year. However, this was still an issue for students on Construction and Engineering courses and staff were working with MIS to ensure that achievements were processed as quickly as possible and the appropriate compliance documents were completed. The aim was to reduce this cohort to 7% (currently 8%) of the total apprenticeships.	
115	The Chair thanked all directors for their clear presentations, which set out the current position in terms of performance and the areas for improvement that would be monitored throughout the academic year. The Committee felt that it had been beneficial to receive the QIP presentations, together with contextual information to provide a holistic understanding of the outcomes of the SAR process.	
116	A governor queried the purpose of presenting the faculty QIPs to the Committee. The AP Quality advised that the intention was to provide governors with a greater level of insight into the documents that contributed to the Executive SAR/QIP and gradings. Governors were reminded that in previous years this process had been carried out directly by the Corporation, but it had been felt that the Committee would be able to drill into the detail more effectively and provide assurance to the Corporation.	
117	It was agreed that governors should explore progress against the areas for improvement during any future link activities.	ALL
118	Questions were raised as to whether the production of the Exec SAR/QIP had been a collaborative effort, with all SMT agreeing the targets and areas for improvement. It was vital that this was a 2-way process, ensuring that information fed upwards, but also that the targets and KPIs filtered downwards to drive performance overall.	
119	The Committee asked that more prominence should be given to a number of further areas for further improvement. Firstly, English and maths had been a particular focus in 2024/2025 and this needed to continue, particularly due to the increased number of students undertaking GCSEs. Some of the indicators in the QIPs could be classified as 'lagging' rather than 'leading'.	KL/DT
120	The impact of improvements in teaching and learning should also be included in the QIPs. The development of progression pathways (either to further study or employment) needed to be enhanced in the Executive QIP. Reference also should be made to inclusivity and diversity.	KL/DT KL/DT
121	The DP advised that management had reviewed the performance data at cohort level for 2025/2026 quality reviews (the first round of which had just been completed). This covered attendance, retention, achievement and pass rates. Next year there would be a greater focus on value added.	
122	Staff were aware students who were retained on programme at Level 1 and for some Level 2 courses had high pass rates, therefore retention and attendance had become the focus at these levels. Retention was a challenge for a number of Level	

	<p>3 programmes as these were 2-year programmes, increasing the risk of withdrawal between year 1 and year 2. The increase in the examined components at level 3 provided additional challenges, with a switch to focus on exam technique and preparation rather than skills development.</p> <p>123 Milestones would be monitored in-year by cohort, cost centre and directorate to determine the success of any interventions or whether it was necessary to try a different solution. A number of cross-College working groups had been established to ensure that good practice was shared between curriculum departments and there was a level of consistency of approach.</p> <p>124 The AP Quality presented the draft Exec SAR/QIP for recommendation to the Corporation. A governor asked why Personal Development had been graded as 'Outstanding' in the Ofsted inspection but had been assessed as 'Good' in the SAR. The DP responded that this was due to a level of inconsistency throughout the remainder of the 2024/2025 academic year. Evidence suggested that there were a small number of areas where the development of PD had not progressed as anticipated and this was why there was a differential in the gradings:</p> <p>125 For the College's provision to be judged as 'Outstanding' these anomalies needed to be addressed. It was agreed that the slide that set out the overall grades would be updated to clarify the point at which PD had been assessed. Management felt that staff would need to put in a considerable amount of effort to achieve the highest grade for PD at the next inspection.</p> <p>126 A governor sought guidance as to what the Committee was being asked to endorse and recommend to the Corporation. They felt that some of the KPIs were unrealistic and governors had little supporting evidence against which to judge the validity of this target, such as an increase in attendance from 70% to 80% for one cohort of learners.</p> <p>127 The AP Quality reiterated the purpose of the Exec SAR/QIP being presented to the Committee. The example quoted related to an area where two members of staff had been on long-term sickness absence that was now resolved, which should enable performance to improve at that level. It was confirmed that these discussions had taken place on a granular level, therefore the KPIs set at local level were very contextualised, colleagues had been encouraged to be ambitious, but realistic.</p> <p>128 Resolved – That the Corporation be recommended to approve the Executive SAR for 2024/2025 and QIP for 2025/2026</p>	
HIGHER EDUCATION STRATEGY		
<p>129</p> <p>130</p>	<p>The Committee received an updated draft of the HE Strategy, a version of which had been discussed at the October 2025 meeting.</p> <p>A governor asked that some of the paragraph structures be simplified in the final document that was submitted to the Corporation for approval. Management was also requested to clarify the purpose of the 'spoke' model referred to in relation to The Link and whether the Strategy should focus on current or future commercial provision. Management commented that the only existing commercial work being undertaken currently was for taxi-driver training, with all other programmes mentioned in the Strategy classified as new provision. Further work on the College's commercial income would be undertaken and submitted for consideration at a future Finance Committee meeting,</p>	<p>DT/KL</p> <p>MTK/KL</p>

131	In response to a written query about the Mindful Partnership the Assistant Principal Adults & WBL advised that the College would continue to engage with this organisation in relation to professional services and apprenticeships.	
132	A governor asked that a KPI on the College being the provider of choice for short course returners should be added to the Strategy. However, it was noted that there was a high level of uncertainty at the moment on the details of the Lifelong Learning Entitlement, which made it difficult to set any such targets. It was agreed that the current targets for 2030 should be maintained until further information became available.	
133	Resolved – That the Corporation be recommended to approve the revised HE Strategy, subject to the above amendments being made	
TEACHING, LEARNING & ASSESSMENT		
134	Governors received a report on Teaching, Learning & Assessment in 2025/2026.	
135	In relation to complaints the Deputy Principal highlighted the action taken to provide supportive training to managers to ensure that any issues were dealt with effectively and in line with the College's policy/procedures. Following a question about the number of instances of academic malpractice that had occurred during 2024/2025 the Assistant Principal Quality reported that the issues documented in the report related to a Counselling programme and should really be defined as 'maladministration'. The report would be amended accordingly.	DT
136	Committee members were invited to attend an exhibition of staff work at the Walsall Art Gallery which was taking place until March 2026.	
137	The Chair requested that more information on apprenticeships and monitoring performance of disadvantaged groups be included in any future reports. The SMT were thanked for the work they had undertaken in the first term of the academic year, which was evident in the reports discussed.	DT/KL
DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS		
	December 2025/Early January 2026 – special meeting to discuss Achieving Together - TBA 26 th February 2026 30 th June 2026	