

Waltham Forest College

THE CORPORATION OF WALTHAM FOREST COLLEGE

CURRICULUM AND QUALITY COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 10 FEBRUARY 2026

MEMBERSHIP

Governors:

Alison Morris (Chair), Susannah Hume (Vice Chair & SEND lead), Kathryn Davies, Bryan Johnston, Janet Gardner (Principal/CEO)

In Attendance:

Richard Harris – Governor observing.

Rachael Booth – Interim Deputy Principal Curriculum & Quality (DPCQ)

Amir Ahmed – Vice Principal (VP)

Aswathy Bose - Assistant Principal Maths & English (APME) – for items 158-161 only

Michael Burgoyne – Assistant Principal Higher Education (APHE)

Jackie Chapman – Strategic Project Lead (SPL)- for items 158-162 only

Clerk to the Corporation

Naomi Shoffman - Director of Governance (DoGov)

158. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies for absence were received from Ms Hume, who was on maternity leave.

159. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

No declarations of interest were made in relation to the items on the agenda

160. MINUTES OF THE CURRICULUM & QUALITY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 25 NOVEMBER 2025

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 November 2025 were agreed as a correct record. It was confirmed that all outstanding actions had been completed.

161. ENGLISH AND MATHS STRATEGY AND PROGRESS

The APME presented the English and Maths strategy paper and highlighted the following.

- The strategy focuses on improving learner achievement, progress, and participation in English and Maths.
- The strategy aligns with statutory funding requirements, the College's strategic plan, and quality assurance framework, and includes learner entitlement, behaviour expectations, curriculum pathways, and accurate placement. Key elements include initial assessment, enrolment, and ensuring maximum attendance and achievement through stipulated delivery hours.
- Teaching, learning, and assessment, emphasising the importance of subject specialists and standardised assessment practices. The College is working with Get Further for tutoring support and exploring technology-enabled diagnostic and assessment platforms to strengthen personalised learning and intervention.
- Attendance and engagement are critical success factors, with a data-led English and Maths attendance strategy being trialled and reviewed continuously.

- The number of resits and examination strategy involves using historical grades, diagnostic assessments, and in-house methods to support learners and improve achievements.

The Committee raised and discussed the following points:

- The change in the exam board and its impact on results. The APME explained that the College trialled Pearson's Language 2.0 specification for two years but reverted to AQA due to better alignment with learner needs and lower boundary marks.
- The difficulty of assessing the impact of multiple changes simultaneously. The APME acknowledged the importance of focusing on attendance, achievement, and teaching and learning, despite the numerous changes.

The Committee commended the APME's efforts and progress in driving these changes.

The Committee noted the report.

162. APPRENTICESHIP PAPER – STRATEGY AND PROGRESS

The SPL provided an overview of the apprenticeship strategy paper. She highlighted the substantive work done within the College to improve the structure and processes, including moving apprenticeships under the VP's leadership for a more structured approach. Compliance was a major focus, with significant improvements made, culminating in a successful audit in September. The SPL emphasised the importance of solid compliance and processes for growing the apprenticeship provision. She then highlighted the following:

- The College is focusing on areas where it excels, aligning with GLA priorities and local labour market information.
- Four areas identified for growth are construction, hospitality (specifically production chef), health and social care, and digital. Construction apprenticeships are being moved to the construction team to embed quality and grow quicker. The hospitality focus is on production chef due to high competition for chef de partie roles. Health and social care apprenticeships are being explored in collaboration with Whipps Cross, potentially across various roles. Digital apprenticeships are an area of interest but not yet ready for launch.
- The detailed action plan for the current and next academic years, including a three-year plan for each curriculum area.

The Committee raised and discussed the following points:

- The Chair asked about the management of apprenticeships by curriculum teams and the potential tension between engagement for apprenticeships and work experience. The SPL explained the benefits of a central team for compliance and employer engagement. The VP added that embedding apprenticeships within curriculum teams allows for greater collaboration and support.
- A member praised the focus on industry connections and the Taylor Wimpey partnership. The SPL emphasised the importance of employer needs for job development and progression. The Principal highlighted the progress made in improving apprenticeship outcomes and compliance, with ongoing work to ensure compliance with changing standards.

The Committee commended the SPL, VP and the team for their efforts and progress.

The Committee noted the report.

163. GOVERNORS HE OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

The Governors HE Oversight Committee meeting was held earlier in the day. Mr Johnston and the APHE provided an update on the preparation for validation meetings scheduled for February. The College is seeking validation for four courses, which involves updating assessment plans, staff handbooks, and other documents. The APHE provided detailed information about the administrative burden of this process. The Committee also received an update on the relationship with the University of Portsmouth, noting that a contract has been signed but no delivery has occurred yet. The discussion

highlighted a postponed project with NHS Barts due to a lack of cohort, attributed to the winter crisis within the NHS.

With regard to the OfS application, there is an indicative date for the Quality, Standards and Assessment (QSA) visit on May 4th. This visit involves face-to-face meetings with various colleagues over a couple of days at the College. The APHE emphasised the extensive work required, including submitting around 260 documents per course. Recently, the College submitted work from Level 4 Beauty for review in preparation for this visit.

The Committee raised and discussed the following points:

- The Chair asked for clarification on the process post-visit, and it was explained that the QSA report would be completed within six weeks, feeding into other standards from A to H. The final judgement would be received approximately 12 weeks after the visit. The discussion revealed frustrations with delays and changes in standards, impacting recruitment for the next academic year. The College is considering franchising with Portsmouth to run from September, although this has proven challenging due to last-minute changes in standards.
- The Committee expressed understanding of the frustrations, highlighting the importance of delivering high-level provision as a government priority. The conversation highlighted the College's adaptability and commitment despite the bureaucratic hurdles.
- The Committee received assurance that appropriate arrangements were in place to support ongoing compliance with Office for Students regulatory requirements and conditions of registration

The Committee agreed to:

- **Continue monitoring OfS engagement and policy developments.**
- **Ensure proactive updates to mitigate any recruitment or operational risks.**

164. CURRICULUM AND QUALITY UPDATE

The DPCQ and APHE presented a comprehensive summary of the College's performance against KPIs. The following areas were highlighted:

- Good progress has been made against KPIs in retention, lesson standards, and UCAS trends, particularly the three-year trend of raising aspirations around Russell Group placements.
- The industrial placements and the Turing scheme have provided valuable experiences for students.
- Apprenticeships and English and maths are identified areas of focus.
- Apprenticeships face challenges due to small numbers, with retention impacting overall achievement. The report noted a best-case scenario of 64.9% achievement, but most likely prediction is around 60% which could decrease with any losses as each learner has a significant impact due to the small numbers.
- English and maths showed good progress, supported by strong oversight and key strategies, with positive impacts already visible in the November recess.

The Committee raised and discussed the following points:

- A member raised points about vulnerable learners in construction and catering, citing a positive case study at New City College, which has impressive results in supporting vulnerable learners. She also mentioned the importance of identifying learners eligible for free College meals, which could impact attendance and support. The executive acknowledged the challenges in accessing data for free college meals, noting efforts to identify eligible students during enrolment. They expressed interest in accessing the DFE database mentioned, which could help target support more effectively. The member said she would provide the link.
- The Chair asked about T levels, noting low numbers and questioning if this was intentional or due to other challenges. The DPCQ explained that T levels were targeted in key curriculum areas based

on LMI data. She mentioned difficulties in sectors where students could work without the qualification, impacting enrolment. Despite low demand, the College secured placements successfully, except for digital.

- The Chair also inquired about A-levels and the College's plans. The DPCQ mentioned ongoing business planning, with a consensus to not rush back into A-levels due to qualification reforms, development of V levels and organisational capacity for change. The College is considering launching more T levels and GCSE suites, particularly in science areas, but has not made a final decision yet.
- A member asked about the status of colleagues appointed for A-levels, noting that some had left due to a preference for teaching A-levels. The DPCQ confirmed that formal consultation meetings would be held once the business plan is finalised, aiming to retain staff but acknowledging the risk of losing those committed to teaching A-levels if the College does not run them next year.

The Chair supported the cautious approach, highlighting the need to review changes carefully and avoid introducing new provisions hastily particularly with the ongoing changes to qualifications. The Committee agreed on the importance of planning based on current information and adapting to ongoing changes and to err on the side of caution.

The Committee noted the progress on the key aspects of curriculum and quality.

165 SAFEGUARDING AND PREVENT REPORT

The VP spoke to the report covering term 2 up until half term and highlighted the following points:

- The number of safeguarding referrals and unique learners involved, with 4.1% of students accessing safeguarding support.
- Overall, learners are being identified earlier, receiving effective intervention, and are less likely to require repeated safeguarding input.
- The top themes for safeguarding were mental health, domestic and relationship abuse, and victims of crime, correlating with national and London contexts.
- Retention data for Term 1 comparison of learners with a known Safeguarding concern was consistent with historic positions .
- The efforts to increase awareness among curriculum colleagues, with MIS working on a dashboard for better oversight.
- Safeguarding training compliance was at 100% for governors, with ongoing efforts to ensure cross-College staff compliance, considering those on long-term sickness or maternity leave.

The Committee raised and discussed the following points:

- A member complimented the reduction in repeat referrals, noting it as a positive outcome.
- A member praised the support provided to students and asked about the integration of safeguarding with curriculum and teaching. The VP acknowledged the need for further improvement, mentioning efforts to enhance three-way conversations between curriculum, students, and the safeguarding team. He discussed the use of Pro Monitor to identify vulnerable students and link information to group profiles. Whilst this is being used effectively for vulnerable learners, the definition of vulnerable has now widened. The discussion addressed the challenge of classifying temporary barriers to learning and maintaining confidentiality while supporting students. The VP mentioned ranking vulnerable learners to provide additional oversight and ensure awareness among staff. The Committee agreed on the importance of triangulating information from various sources to support vulnerable learners effectively.
- A member noted the strong position of the College in supporting vulnerable learners, highlighting the wealth of information and good practices already in place. The VP mentioned the need to stress-test processes and welcomed any good practices from others.

The Committee noted the report.

166. OFSTED TOOLKIT

The APHE briefed the Committee on the new Ofsted toolkit, noting significant changes in the inspection framework. The overall one-word judgement has been replaced with 16 judgements on a report card. The first college reports under the new framework have been published, showing a consistent tone and style. The inspection cycle is now four years from the last inspection, with the College expecting an inspection by April 2028 (last inspected March 2024). However, it could still be subject to a monitoring visit in between subject to risk.

The APHE highlighted the changes in grading judgements, with the 'expected standard' akin to the old 'good', 'strong standard' linked to 'outstanding', and 'exceptional' as a new category. Copies of the framework are available, although it was noted that the details were limited.

The discussion also covered the inclusion aspect, focusing on disadvantaged learners, asylum seekers, and other vulnerable groups. Inspectors will examine inclusion through data, case sampling, and learning walks to evaluate support in practice. The contribution to skills remains unchanged, with a focus on stakeholder engagement to shape the curriculum.

The briefing outlined the reporting themes under the new framework: curriculum teaching training, achievement, and participation and development. The APHE expressed concern about the focus on data, reminiscent of the old common inspection framework.

The toolkit was presented as a secure fit judgement rather than a checklist, although the APHE said he remained sceptical. Inspectors will start from the expected standard, moving to strong standard if all criteria are met, or backwards if not.

The briefing concluded with a focus on leadership and governance, emphasising support for learners with barriers to learning, statutory duties, strategic priorities, workload and well-being, and oversight of subcontracting provision.

Asked about the status of the outstanding judgement during the transition to the new framework, the APHE clarified that the College remains outstanding until the next inspection, unless prompted earlier by significant concerns.

The Committee noted the changes in the Ofsted inspection framework and the implications for the College, including the new grading judgements and the laser focus on inclusion and data.

167. RISK REGISTER REVIEW

The DPCQ presented the Risk Register showing pre and post mitigation scorings, and controls in place to mitigate risks identified for curriculum and quality. All key risk areas have been updated with recent controls and management activities. The DPCQ highlighted risk items 5 (quality) and the new no 13 (apprenticeships) and explained the rationale for separating apprenticeships as a distinct risk due to low numbers and retention rates. The mitigations include local Quality Improvement Plans (QIPs) to ensure timely actions for improvement. The Committee agreed that separating apprenticeships from overall achievement rates provides clearer visibility and better aligns with DfE scrutiny.

The Committee received and noted the updated College Risk Register.

168. ANY OTHER ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS

The Principal advised that she has been invited to give evidence to the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Adult Education, focusing on economic impact and workforce development. The Chair and other members offered support and agreed to share relevant information to strengthen the argument for the sector.

169. **ITEMS TO BE ADDRESSED AT FUTURE MEETINGS OF THE COMMITTEE**

The Committee is asked to note that the agendas for future meetings will include items as per the agreed business cycle for 2025/26.

170. **DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

23 June 2026

18.39 finish

These minutes have been approved by the Curriculum and Quality Committee and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

.....Alison Morris23 June 2026.....

Signed

Date