

MILTON KEYNES COLLEGE GROUP

CORPORATION BOARD MEETING

Part B Draft Minutes of the meeting held on 11th December 2024

Pitching Room, SClOT, Bletchley Campus

18:00 – 19:00

Board Members	Category of Governor	Attendance Record 2024/25	Present at this meeting
Sally Alexander	CEO	3 of 3	Sally Alexander
Abbas Bandali ²	Student	2 of 2	Abbas Bandali
Richard Bartlett-Rawlings	Independent	2 of 3	<i>Sent apologies</i>
Ian Bickers	Independent	3 of 3	Ian Bickers (Teams)
Ajira Bouchada ¹	Independent	2 of 3	Ajira Bouchada (Teams)
Mat Gotkowski	Independent	3 of 3	Mat Gotkowski (Teams) (in part)
Leroi Henry	Independent	1 of 3	Leroi Henry
Catherine McKenna-Mackmurdo ²	Student	1 of 2	<i>Sent apologies</i>
Rebecca Myrie	Staff	3 of 3	Rebecca Myrie
Amit Nayyar	Independent	3 of 3	Amit Nayyar (Teams)
Angie Novell	Independent	2 of 3	Angie Novell
Ruby Parmar	Independent	3 of 3	Ruby Parmar
Ian Revell	Independent	3 of 3	Ian Revell
Neil Sainsbury	Independent	3 of 3	Neil Sainsbury (Teams)
Lindsey Styles	Independent	3 of 3	Lindsey Styles
Jay Timpany	Staff	3 of 3	Jay Timpany
Manish Verma	Independent	2 of 3	<i>Sent apologies</i>
Jeremy Wilsdon	Independent	3 of 3	Jeremy Wilsdon (in part)
Tom Wraight	Independent	3 of 3	Tom Wraight
¹ from 2/10/24 ² from 1/11/24			
Attendance % this meeting		84%	16 / 19
Attendance % year to date		89%	48 / 54

Attendees at this meeting: Mark Fell (Executive Principal), Jason Mansell (Chief Operating Officer), Karen Brown (Head of Governance), Amy Langford (Group Director Inclusion) (in part), Mark Walsh (Deputy Director: Curriculum (in part), Jules Quinn (Group Director People Services (in part), Suan Akhtar (Group Director: Finance) (in part)

1.0 Procedural

1.1 Confidential Item (Part A minutes)

1.2 Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.
Apologies had been received from Richard Bartlett-Rawlings, Manish Verma, Catherine McKenna-Mackmurdo, Annie Allen and Sam Samuels.

1.3 **Declaration of Interests**
None previously declared

2.0 **Strategic Priorities 2024/25**

2.1 **CEO's Report and Board Dashboard** *(previously circulated as Paper 2.1)*

Sally Alexander drew attention to the following:

AoC Conference

The Chair of Governors and members of the Group Leadership Team attended the AOC Conference which was useful for networking purposes. The College was able to showcase how it is supporting lower-level learners through the Skills Academy. Key speakers included Jacqui Smith, Minister for Skills, and Martyn Oliver, HM Chief Inspector at the Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted).

The College has invited Bridget Phillipson, Secretary of State for Education and Peter Kyle, Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology to visit.

Mission Accepted: the role of colleges across the government's five missions

Sally attended the launch of the AoC's [Mission Accepted publication](#) at the House of Lords which features case studies outlining how colleges are responding to the five missions.

Prison Education Service (PES) Contract

More news on the PES contracts is expected in the spring. Members of the ELT are visiting our prisons.

Industry Connect Day

This new initiative enabled staff to engage with employers and stakeholders as part of their CPD.

T Level Challenge

Members of the senior team engaged with practical activities to raise awareness of T-Levels.

Governors asked questions to which Sally responded:

How is the College benefiting by offering trainee teachers work placements in prisons as this creates additional work for our staff?

Based on previous experience, we are confident this will assist staff recruitment.

Where are the gaps in the College's culture and processes in relation to the White Ribbon accreditation?

The White Ribbon campaign is addressing violence against women and girls. The College had no significant gaps however there was a checklist of criteria which had to be met.

Is the College working with MK ACT?

Yes, following the recent Friends and Allies Network (FAN) meeting, MK ACT (a local charity which supports families to move on from fear and abuse), is offering a drop-in service for our students. The Chair of Governors is a Trustee.

Governors who attended the recent graduation event congratulated the College and encouraged other governors to attend events which celebrate student success.

The Board received the CEO Report

2.2 Safeguarding Termly Update *(previously circulated as Paper 2.2)*

Amy Langford was welcomed to the meeting and highlighted key headlines from her report:

- There were 54 level 4 disciplinary meetings this term which is significantly higher than last year. 40% of those students have SEND and 70% are male. New approaches e.g. the introduction of campus managers, an expanded behaviour team and increased student numbers are contributing to the higher numbers.
- Disciplinary incidents involving violence, intimidation, and harmful sexual behaviours are often complex and often involve multiple students (Amy gave a recent example involving seven students).
- The College is increasing its capacity to manage harmful sexual behaviours, (particularly technology enabled behaviours), by engaging specialists and collaborating with external organisations.
- There is a focus on White Ribbon and a culture of openness and transparency so that all students, irrespective of gender, are empowered to challenge inappropriate behaviour and work together to find solutions. The FAN event last week involved the YMCA, MK ACT, Thames Valley Police and White Ribbon with focus groups following up the issues raised.
- Planning for the new Terrorism Bill (Martyn's Law) is underway; this relates to a responsibility to keep premises safe (including lockdown and evacuation procedures).
- Keeping Children Safe in Education 2025 may introduce a requirement that young people have a safeguarding file which follows them throughout their education (this year alone the College has received 1600 new safeguarding files which all had to be processed). The role of education may become statutory (alongside the police and social services) which will increase responsibilities.

Governor asked questions to which Amy responded:

Where criminal offences occur, does the College use CCTV and make referrals to the police?

Yes, CCTV is in place and information is shared with the police under the guidance of the College's Data Protection Officer. We are considering introducing a Harmful & Sexual Behaviour specialist as the law in this area is frequently being updated.

Have you analysed the disciplinary numbers by ethnicity?

Yes, and the figures are proportionate to the composition of our student body. Next time we will analyse and report the data (types of challenge) by ethnicity.

Action 1: Amy Langford by 19 March 2025

If colleges have increased statutory responsibilities, will more funding be available?

This is not known. The expectation is that there will be an education representative for an area which may or may not be the College.

Of the 54 disciplinaries, how many involve students new to the College? Does the College assess prior behaviour before enrolling a new student?

The majority of disciplinaries involve new students. We are starting to work with feeder schools on potential challenges; previously we have focused on safeguarding but are now broadening the scope to include behaviour.

54 is a very large number. What is the impact on staff workloads in managing these meetings and also how is poor behaviour impacting all staff more generally?

The disciplinaries are being managed within the Inclusion team (behaviour, wellbeing and safeguarding leads all working together) which also ensures a consistent approach. There is no indication e.g. through the Peakon satisfaction survey, that behaviour is having a broader impact on staff. All staff have had training this year on managing behaviour.

The Board received assurance on Safeguarding

*Amy was thanked for attending and she left the meeting
Mark Walsh was welcomed to the meeting*

2.3 Student Experience

Mark Fell highlighted the headlines from his reports

a) Student Achievement / Self-Assessment Report (SAR) 2023/24 and Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) 2024/25 (previously circulated as Papers 2.3, 2.3A and 2.3B)

Mark referred to the College's SAR, which is an internal document setting out the College's strengths and areas for improvement and as such, it is a valuable tool for governors. Following a rigorous validation process, all key judgements, Provision Type judgements, and Schools Judgements are Good (or better) which aligns to the February 2024 Ofsted judgements.

The QIP describes, in detail, the proposed actions to address the development areas and is scrutinised at each meeting by the Curriculum & Quality Group (CQG). The key areas for 2024/25 are:

- Attendance
- Maths achievement
- Formative assessment methods
- The Personal Development curriculum offer, implementation and tracking
- Work experience, skills competitions, exam performance for externally set and moderated exams

Mark highlighted:

- There is no gap between the achievement of High Needs and Non-High Needs students. Overall achievement for High Needs was good (87%). 25% of 16-19 learners have high needs and the number is increasing.
- Full time outcomes, for the majority of learners, are good. At Level 3, 88.3% of vocational learners achieved their qualifications with 47% achieving high grades.
- However, 2023/24 overall achievement (including English and maths) at 82.9% (83.5% in 2022/23) was adversely affected by maths functional skills (exam attendance) and retention. Level 1 achievement fell by 14.6 percentage points. Maths, which was self-assessed as Inadequate, is subject to internal intervention.

A governor confirmed that CQG members had attended school SAR validation meetings where supporting evidence had been reviewed and challenged. The recent Ofsted inspection provides governors with additional assurance.

Governors asked questions to which Mark responded:

Are the schools assessed as Good or better sharing good practice across the College?

Yes, this is happening through the Curriculum Review Process (CPR) (discussed below).

What is the definition of High Grades?

For vocational qualifications it is DDD (where D is Distinction), for GCSE it is Grade 7 or above and for A Levels it is A or A*. 47% High Grades are exceptional for a FE College, and good practice is being shared with all schools.

Where are students moving to after College? Are they attaining the necessary grades to enable them to progress to their chosen university or to work?

Level 3 students progressing to employment, university or higher level education or training is over 90%.

Governors requested a more detailed analysis of destinations.

Action 2: Mark Fell by 5 February 2025

Apprenticeships overall is 'green' yet a third of apprentices do not complete their qualification on time. Is this appropriate?

We will review this after CPR2. There is an issue with one area (Engineering) due to staff vacancies.

Action 3: Mark Fell by 5 February 2025

b) Student Achievement 2024/25 / Impact of the new Curriculum Strategy
(previously circulated as Papers 2.3C and 2.3D)

Curriculum Performance Review (CPR) / Performance Scorecard

CPRs are scheduled every half term when all Heads of Schools meet and scrutinise performance for every school based on 68 metrics. This process is holding Heads to account every six weeks as well as sharing good practice and provides a current view of in-year performance. It also supports a process of early intervention and support and highlights trends.

CPR1 took place in November and CPR2 will take place next week; CQG governors have been invited to attend.

Intervention Process

Any team judged to be Grade 4 (Inadequate) is subject to a six-week intervention process which for maths includes target setting, teaching and learning observations (45% of lessons observed were assessed as effective), student forums, and support to improve attendance and outcomes. 77% of maths teachers have less than 2 years' experience so are receiving appropriate coaching and mentoring. Progress and impact will be assessed at CPR2.

Impact of the CPR Process and Curriculum Strategy

Mark Walsh, Deputy Director: Curriculum (and former Active Industries Head of School) confirmed that the CPR and new Curriculum Strategy had been well received by Heads and he described how they were driving accountability, consistency and innovation, raising awareness of finance and funding as well as sharing good practice. He gave examples of how English & maths is being embedded and how teachers are working together. Schools are developing a School Curriculum Strategy covering the next three years outlining how the curriculum will be developed in response to reforms, skills needs and curriculum efficiency.

Governors asked questions to which Mark F responded:

The CPR1 process has identified Construction and Engineering as requiring improvement yet these are professions in high demand. How are you addressing this?

The CPR process is enabling us to focus on the aspects needing support from the Quality Team such as staff recruitment, quality of teaching and learning, attendance, behaviour, work experience etc.

The CPR process is being trialled with prisons.

Monitoring is relevant but how are teachers interacting differently with students? How are students giving feedback?

We are upskilling staff and have introduced a blueprint for success for teaching and learning. We are requesting feedback from students during learning walks and through focus groups covering a range of topics such as attendance, student experience and targets and expected outcomes.

What is the current attendance level for maths?

80% (target 85%)

Since CPR 1, we have changed timetables and vocational teachers are accompanying students to English and maths lessons. This has had a positive impact.

The Board:

- **Approved the SAR (2023/24) and Quality Improvement Plan (2024/25)**
- **Noted the update on the CPR1 (in-year performance) and the impact of the Curriculum Strategy on Active Industries**

c) CQG Meetings 11 November 2024 and 27 November 2024 (previously circulated as Paper 2.3E)

Jez Wilsdon referred the Board to the report of the meetings and confirmed that members had attended school SAR validation meetings and reviewed the College SAR and QIP. There had been a spotlight on maths and governors had received assurance on the intervention process. At the next meeting, the CQG will review the outcomes of the intervention and there will be a further spotlight on maths.

The Prisons QIP had also been reviewed for progress and impact. The College has had an opportunity to give feedback to Ofsted on the inspection process in prisons. Mark added that currently, there is only one grade for prisons covering education, skills and work activities which may mean the College's work is adversely affected by the prison regime, over which it has no control.

The Board approved the report of the meeting

*Mark Walsh was thanked for attending and he left the meeting
Jez Wilsdon left at 18:15*

Change of Order

3.1 Audit & Risk Committee meeting of 22 November 2024 ((previously circulated as Papers 3.1 and 3.1A)

Mat Gotkowski drew attention to the report of the meeting.

The Committee had scrutinised the draft Financial Statements and the auditors had attended to present the internal audit annual report and the external audit post-audit report (Consent Papers 4.1). No issues had been raised however the external audit had included three recommendations (which will be followed up by the Committee), relating to:

- Prison reconciliation process
- Maintenance of the fixed asset register
- Accounts consolidation

When reviewing risks (Paper 3.1A), governors had debated the residual risk relating to safeguarding and even though there were controls in place to mitigate the risks, had concluded that a 'red' rating was appropriate.

The Board approved the:

- **Report of the meeting**
- **Strategic Risk Register**
- **Audit & Risk Committee Terms of Reference for 2024/25**
- **Reappointment of Buzzacott as External Auditors for 2024/25**

2.6B Finance Group meeting of 15 November 2024 ((previously circulated as Paper 2.6B)

Mat Gotkowski drew attention to the report of the meeting when governors had scrutinised the Period 2 management accounts and documents supporting the Financial statements.

The Board approved the:

- **Report of the meeting**
- **Finance Group Terms of Reference for 2024/25**

Jules Quinn was welcomed to the meeting

2.4 People and Culture: Vision for the Workforce Plan (previously circulated as Paper 2.4)

Jules Quinn presented the vision for the strategic workforce plan, which will align the workforce with the long-term strategic goals i.e. ensuring the College has the right number of employees with the necessary skills and capabilities. The Plan will:

- Deliver efficiencies
- Improve Quality (of experience for staff and students)
- Accommodate Growth
- Respond to curriculum reforms and funding changes
- Meet the People KPIs
- Create a competitive advantage

Jules outlined the six strands of work:

1. Strategy Alignment
2. Workforce Analysis
3. Demand Forecasting
4. Supply Forecasting
5. Gap Analysis
6. Monitoring

The College will be seeking input from external partners and the Plan is due to come back to the Board in June for approval. This may also present an opportunity to review all internal processes e.g. appraisal, grievance etc as well as addressing the KPIs e.g. diversity profile

Mat Gotkowski left at 18:30

Governors asked questions to which Jules and Jason Mansell responded:

In order to be more proactive, should the College limit student growth or recruit staff in anticipation of growth?

We need to take calculated risks. Over the last 12 months, the number of staff vacancies has reduced considerably, and the College is working with the Council to model future student numbers which may give us more confidence to recruit staff in anticipation of growth. However, we do not want to increase our cost base and find we are over staffed. Currently the College has good quality of provision (confirmed by Ofsted) and good financial health.

Are there consistent gaps in staff?

There are always challenges in some areas such as electrical, engineering and construction.

This Plan will ensure that People Services know ahead of time which areas are planned to grow so that they can be proactive and recruit the necessary skills.

There is much more collaboration taking place between curriculum teams and group services and across schools.

Is there a correlation between areas which are hard to recruit and quality of provision e.g. Construction and Engineering have been self-assessed as Requiring Improvement? The College does not offer competitive salaries compared to industry rates.

We have considered paying higher salaries for some roles, but we also must consider how fair this is when compared to the salaries of existing, more experienced staff.

The SAR grade for Construction relates specifically to the achievement of lower level learners as the decision was made in 2023/24 for them to sit within the school rather than in Skills Academy (where they would have received a different level of support). This has not been repeated this year.

There has been a high level of staff turnover in Engineering including several colleagues who have no prior teaching experience. How are they being supported?

The Quality Team is providing coaching and mentoring. We welcome staff with an industry background, and we help them to develop teaching skills, but we recognise that lower level learners can be challenging for inexperienced teachers.

Are non-monetary incentives offered to teachers?

Yes, and we want to make the College an attractive place to work e.g. leave entitlement and pensions are attractive compared to industry.

The Board noted the developing plan and endorsed the approach

Jules was thanked for attending and she left the meeting

Susan Akhtar was welcomed to the meeting

2.5 Financial Statements FY2024 (previously circulated as Papers 2.5, 2.5A and 2.5B)

Susan Akhtar referred to Paper 2.5. The College achieved a surplus of £1.56m (which was favourable to budget and an improvement on FY2023) and Financial Health was 'Good'. It was a strong financial performance in a year when Ofsted also confirmed the quality of provision to be 'Good' and investments had been made in staff salaries, growth in student numbers, progress towards carbon neutrality and improvements to the estate. Paper 2.5A had been scrutinised by the Audit & Risk Committee. Supporting documents, listed in Consent item 4.1, had been reviewed and recommended for approval by the appropriate Committee / scrutiny group.

The audit opinions given are:

- Financial Statements audits of the College & subsidiaries - unqualified audit opinions
- Regularity assurance - unqualified audit opinion
- Teachers' Pension Scheme audit – two exceptions noted (no material issues)

Going Concern

The going concern assumes the College will receive 50% support towards the increase in National Insurance contributions (the Government has not yet confirmed the amount).

Staff Pay Recommendation

Jason Mansell reminded governors that in recognition of the cost of living crisis, when negotiating the 2023/24 pay award, the College had committed to reviewing the 23/24 financial performance and if affordable, to consider a further payment (reference CEO Report 4 October 2023).

In the context of the financial performance for FY2024, the ELT is now recommending an unconsolidated payment of £375 (pro rata) to every member of staff (to be paid in January 2025). The payment to Prison based staff is also subject to the MoJ confirming payment of the associated 2023/24 Indexation Release Request.

Staff are also receiving two additional days leave (pro rata) over Christmas to acknowledge the positive Ofsted outcome.

Governors asked questions to which Jason responded:

Has a one-off payment been made to staff in the past and will this create a precedent?

Yes, it is not unique. However, it will not set a precedent as it relates to specific negotiations with the unions in 2023. We have not made this commitment when negotiating the 2024/25 pay award.

Have you considered paying a higher amount to lower paid staff?

We have done this in the past but on this occasion, we are recommending a standard one-off amount.

In the last pay review, the College made sure that no teaching staff salaries were below £30k and that all staff were paid above the living wage.

The Chair of Governors congratulated the College on the financial performance and the excellent work in producing the Financial Statements. It was noted that there were no unadjusted audit items.

The Board:

- ***Approved the Group's Report and Financial Statements for the year ended 31 July 2024 for signature and publication on the College website***
- ***Approved a one-off, unconsolidated payment of £375 (pro rata) to all campus and prison staff to be paid in January 2025 (the payment to prison staff is also subject to the MoJ confirming payment of the associated 2023/24 Indexation Release Request)***
- ***Noted the reconciliation of P12 to the budget.***

2.6 Financial Health 2024/25

a) Management Accounts Period 3 *(previously circulated as Paper 2.6A)*

Susan Akhtar referred to the P3 Management Accounts. As at the end of October, the surplus was £311k which was favourable to budget.

The cash balance was £11.8m and cash days 62. Financial Health was 'Good'

The Board approved the Management Accounts for Period 3

b) Finance Group Meeting 15 November 2024 *(previously circulated as Paper 2.6B)*

Minuted above.

Susan was thanked for attending and she left the meeting

3.0 GOVERNANCE AND COMPLIANCE

3.1 Audit & Risk Committee meeting of 22 November 2024 *((previously circulated as Paper 4.1)*

Minuted above

3.2 Capital Projects Monitoring Group (CPMG) meeting of 11 November 2024 *(previously circulated as Paper 3.2)*

There was no discussion.

The Board approved the report of the meeting

3.3 MKC Commercial Ltd (MKCCL) / The Code Makers Academy Ltd (CMAL) meetings 3 December 2024 *(previously circulated as Paper 3.3)*

Sally Alexander referred to the report of the meetings and highlighted the actions to appoint / reappoint Mark Fell / Manish Verma respectively as Directors of MKC Commercial Ltd. The College is expecting documentation from the DfE to novate contracts relating to The Code Makers Academy Ltd.

The Board approved the:

- ***Report of the meetings***
- ***Re-appointment of Manish Verma, as a Director of MKCCL and CMAL, for a second term of office***
- ***Appoint Mark Fell as a Director of MKCCL, for a first term of office***

3.4 Items for the next meeting (5 February 2025)

- Student Experience: Student Voice, CPR2, Curriculum Plan 2025/26
- CEFSS recommendations
- STEMx activities (pre-meeting)

4.0 CONSENT AGENDA

The following items were approved by consent / without discussion:

4.1 Financial Statements FY2024 Supporting Documents

The Board noted for assurance:

- ***Buzzacott's External Audit Post Audit Report (Paper 4.1A)***

- **Validera’s Internal Audit Annual Report (Paper 4.1B)**
- **Audit & Risk Committee Annual Report (Paper 4.1G)**
- **Search & Governance Committee Annual Report (Paper 4.1H)**
- **Remuneration Committee Annual Report (Paper 4.1I)**
- **The Code Makers Academy Ltd Signed Accounts (Paper 4.1J)**
- **MKC Commercial Ltd Signed Accounts (Paper 4.1K)**

The Board approved for signing:

- **Representation Letter from the College (and its subsidiaries) (Paper 4.1C)**
- **MKCG Going Concern Statement (Paper 4.1D)**
- **Letter of Support MKCG to MKCC Ltd (Paper 4.1E)**
- **RSAQ (Paper 4.1F)**

4.2 Environmental Sustainability: Climate Action Plan (previously circulated as Paper 5.2A)

The Board approved the Climate Action Plan

4.3 Modern Slavery Statement 2024/25 (previously circulated as Paper 4.3)

The Board approved the Modern Slavery Statement for publication on the website

4.4 Minutes of the last meeting (6 November 2024) (previously circulated as Papers Confidential 4.4A, Paper 4.4B and Confidential 4.4C)

The Board approved the Minutes of the Board Meeting held on 6 November 2024

Matters arising

Date Raised	Actions arising from the last and previous meetings	Action Owner	Current position
6 /11/24	Circulate details of the new Directors	MF	Complete (email 14/11/24)
2/10/24	2. Report on the analysis of SEND vs non-SEND in mainstream provision.	MF	Complete reported at agenda item 2.3
	3. Present the impact of the new Curriculum Strategy	MF	Complete reported at agenda item 2.3

Next Meeting 5th February 2025



Approved 5th February 2025
 Ruby Parmar
 Chair of Governors