

MILTON KEYNES COLLEGE GROUP

CORPORATION BOARD MEETING

Draft Minutes of the meeting held on 19th March 2025
Pitching Room, SCIoT, Bletchley Campus
17:00 – 19:00

Board Members	Category of Governor	Attendance Record 2024/25	Present at this meeting
Sally Alexander	CEO	5 of 5	Sally Alexander
Abbas Bandali ²	Student	4 of 4	Abbas Bandali
Richard Bartlett-Rawlings	Independent	4 of 5	Richard Bartlett-Rawlings
Ian Bickers	Independent	4 of 4	Ian Bickers
Ajira Bouchada ¹	Independent	3 of 5	<i>Sent apologies</i>
Mat Gotkowski	Independent	5 of 5	Mat Gotkowski
Leroi Henry	Independent	2 of 5	<i>Sent apologies</i>
Catherine McKenna-Mackmurdo ²	Student	2 of 4	<i>Sent apologies</i>
Rebecca Myrie	Staff	4 of 5	<i>Sent apologies</i>
Amit Nayyar	Independent	5 of 5	Amit Nayyar (Teams)
Angie Novell	Independent	3 of 5	Angie Novell (Teams)
Ruby Parmar	Independent	5 of 5	Ruby Parmar
Ian Revell	Independent	5 of 5	Ian Revell
Neil Sainsbury	Independent	5 of 5	Neil Sainsbury
Lindsey Styles	Independent	5 of 5	Lindsey Styles
Jay Timpany	Staff	5 of 5	Jay Timpany
Manish Verma	Independent	4 of 5	Manish Verma
Jeremy Wilsdon	Independent	4 of 5	<i>Sent apologies</i>
Tom Wraight	Independent	4 of 5	Tom Wraight
¹ from 2/10/24 ² from 1/11/24			
Attendance % this meeting		74%	14 / 19
Attendance % year to date		85%	79 / 93

Attendees at this meeting: Jason Mansell (Chief Operating Officer), Karen Brown (Head of Governance), Sam Samuels (Governance Partner)

Attendees in part: Claire Atkins (Interim Lead Director: Prison Services), Amy Langford (Group Director: Inclusion), Nathan Flynn (Group Director: Quality), Susan Akhtar (Group Director of Finance)

1.0 Procedural

1.1 Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed Claire Atkins and Nathan Flynn to the meeting.
Apologies had been received from Mark Fell, Jez Wilsdon, Rebecca Myrie, Leroi Henry, Ajira Bouchada and Catherine McKenna-Mackmurdo.

- 1.2 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:

Student Visit to Thailand (funded by the Turing Scheme)

The Turing Scheme supports social mobility and international opportunities for students, particularly for those who might not otherwise get the chance to study, work abroad and visit another country. The recent visit to Thailand was very successful, and the students (some of whom had not previously left Milton Keynes), gained qualifications in Thai cooking and massage as well as experiencing the Thai culture. The funding enabled students from disadvantaged and underrepresented backgrounds, and those with special educational or additional needs and disabilities (SEND) to participate.

There will be a future media article and a display of photos at the Student of the Year (7th May).

Governors asked to hear from some students about their experience, maybe at the Board's strategic event on 30th April.

Action 1: Karen Brown by 30th April 2025

New Ofsted Framework

The College is engaging with the consultation which may be extended.

Educational Select Committee Inquiry

The College's response had been circulated to the Board and to our local MPs with an offer from Sally to give evidence directly to the Select Committee.

Ian Revell arrived at 17:10

South Central Institute of Technology

Minuted as confidential

Prison Education Services (PES)

Minuted as confidential

The Board received the CEO Report

Claire was thanked for attending and she left the meeting.

Amy Langford was welcomed to the meeting

2.2A Student Experience: Safeguarding *(previously circulated as Paper 2.2A)*

Sally Alexander reminded the Board of the rationale for the Skills Academy (SA) which is highlighted in Paper 2.2A as having the highest number of stage 4 (highest level) disciplinary hearings. The SA is aimed at lower level students and those who present a range of needs e.g. behaviour, concentration. In accepting these young people, the College is meeting the City's needs otherwise many would be NEET (not in education, employment or training). The SA aligns to our Fairer Futures strategy

and by bringing these students together in one school, the College can better support their needs with specialist staff.

Amy Langford provided an update on safeguarding and behaviour management:

- There has been an increase in level 4 disciplinarys which can be attributed to better identification and proactive management of behaviour challenges, improved screening and better use of CCTV. The increase is proportionate to the increased number of students and reflects effective risk management. There are more safeguarding leads and campus managers on site which is surfacing more issues.
- Governors can take assurance from the recent audit on safeguarding which has confirmed 'substantial assurance' (highest level of assurance) with only one minor suggestion.
- Disciplinary hearings are now centralised resulting in a consistent approach. Exclusions are a last resort and involve detailed action plans and support for the excluded students. There were 12 exclusions (all had police involvement) which is a similar level to the national average for secondary schools (no data exists for the FE sector).
- The College collaborates with partner agencies, including the police, mental health services and social services, to address behavioural challenges and support students. We are also receiving data from schools to identify issues at an early stage.

The Link Governor for Safeguarding added that from his additional engagement with Amy he has total confidence in the team who are doing a great job in challenging circumstances. The White Ribbon work is very important.

Governors asked questions to which Amy responded:

Are there any indications that behaviour is improving?

Yes, but only at the lower level (least serious) e.g. not wearing name badges.

The level 4 disciplinarys have all involved violence where incidents occur offsite between diverse groups and are then brought into college.

43% of stage 4 disciplinarys involved female students and 66% of exclusions were female. In the cases involving females there was more evidence of planning and premeditation ("honey trapping").

Is COVID still having a knock-on effect on behaviour?

Yes, we are not seeing a reduction yet, but we anticipate the issues will change over time.

Is the College forewarned of potential issues?

Yes, where there have been confidential disclosures we have followed these up to identify and manage risk. The campus managers are developing good relationships with students and can de-escalate situations. There is a confidential app where students can provide anonymous information directly to the Behaviour and Safeguarding teams.

Does the College turn away very challenging students?

Not for behaviour reasons unless they have a prior criminal conviction (in which case we will undertake a criminal risk assessment). We may consider whether Sofea would be a better option for students who present with specific behavioural challenges.

The College works closely with the Stephenson Trust MK (STMK) on transition plans as these young people may experience more significant challenges with the change in environment.

Do disruptive students impact on other students?

We offer support for students (and staff) on a case-by-case basis. We are guided by the police where they are involved.

Are students involved in the discussion about the Mental Health Charter? Is there a Mental Health Policy for staff?

A working group, including students, will be informing the strategy.

There is no standalone staff mental health policy but a range of policies, initiatives and support mechanisms are in place to promote and protect staff wellbeing including attendance and wellbeing guidelines, employee assistance programme (EAP), occupational health services, trained mental health first aiders, flexible working options, workload and wellbeing meetings with the unions and #AreYouOK (health and wellbeing website).

The Board received assurance on Safeguarding.

2.2B Student Experience: Careers *(previously circulated as Paper 2.2B)*

Amy Langford referred governors to Paper 2.2B and highlighted the positive external validation of the careers service, including feedback from Matrix and Ofsted, and emphasised the importance of maintaining strong partnerships. There are plans to ensure more consistency across curriculum areas in career planning for all students. Careers (careers meetings held and effective careers plans in place) is a metric in the balanced scorecard and monitored through the CPR (Curriculum Performance Review) process.

In response to a question Amy assured governors on the progress being made against the outstanding Matrix actions. Following her training, the Head of Community (who oversees careers) will be supporting colleagues to drive improvements and consistency.

The Board received assurance on careers provision

*Amy Langford was thanked for attending and she left the meeting
Nathan Flynn was welcomed to the meeting*

2.3A Student Experience (campus) *(previously circulated as Paper 2.3A)*

Nathan highlighted the headlines from Paper 2.3A including in-year student progress (CPR3), quality improvement (Quality Improvement Plan) and the latest student satisfaction survey.

Quality Improvement Plan (QIP)

- Attendance is below our target (although better than the regional and national picture especially in English and maths). Good progress is being made with Work Experience (WEX) which is currently at 60% and with maths outcomes (November mock examinations).

CPR3 (Curriculum Performance Reviews as at February half-term)

- The aggregate score across all schools was 2.08 i.e. a solid 'Good' and no change since CPR2. This is in line with the February 2024 Ofsted grade. The quality of Teaching and learning is a strength.
- Maths has moved out of intervention. Engineering remains in intervention (due to a high number of staff new to teaching requiring additional support).
- Business and Digital will have a bespoke intervention to support assessment tracking. Maths attendance in Barbering and Music has improved significantly.

Student Satisfaction

- The most recent survey was conducted in February. Satisfaction rates remained steady although response rates dropped compared to the previous survey. There was a correlation between CPR4 outcomes and response rates (e.g. Engineering had the lowest response rate and WEX was an area of concern for students).

Governors asked questions to which Nathan responded:

Is there a similar QIP and CPR process for prisons?

Yes, there has always been a QIP. A similar scorecard and CPR process has been developed for prisons and is being piloted at HMP Fosse Way.

Can you explain the 54% of students staying at the College when reporting destinations?

These are students who progress to another programme at the College e.g. Level 1 to Level 2 or Level 2 to Apprenticeships.

When reporting Higher Education as a destination we can only measure this based on UCAS applications i.e. we don't have the information on whether they take up a place.

How does the destination data compare to previous years?

University applications have increased.

Destinations and career pathways are linked to students receiving effective careers advice as discussed at item 2.2B.

How is the student survey being delivered to students?

It is a Microsoft form which is emailed directly to students or accessed via an app. Heads of School receive updates on response rates, so they can prompt students accordingly. There are constraints in how the data can be analysed (e.g. by ethnicity) which are being explored.

The Student Governor commented that some Engineering students had not received the survey, nor had time to go through the survey with a progress mentor. Nathan will investigate.

Action 2: Nathan Flynn by 30th April 2025

Does the 60% WEX figure relate solely to external work placements, or does it include other work-related activity? How are T Levels affecting WEX?

WEX does include some work-related activities such as online work experience with an employer, however guest speakers are recorded as 'enrichment' not WEX.

Meeting the T Levels required work placement hours (minimum 315 hours or 45 days) is an ongoing challenge for the sector and where there are limited opportunities to work with employers, T Level students have to be prioritised.

The Chair reminded governors that the CPR4 meetings will take place on 1st April, and all are invited to attend (it is a useful way for governors to triangulate the reports from the leadership team).

The Board noted the assurance on in-year student progress and CPR3

2.3B Curriculum & Quality Group (CQG) Meeting 3rd March 2025 (previously circulated as Paper 2.3B)

No discussion.

The Board approved the report of the meeting

*Nathan was thanked for attending and he left the meeting
Susan Akhtar was welcomed to the meeting*

2.4 Financial Health

a) 2024/25: Budget Reforecast / Period 6 Management Accounts (previously circulated as Paper 2.4A)

The Finance Group had scrutinised a previous version of the P6 accounts, including the Budget reforecast and given feedback.

Susan highlighted the headlines:

- The reforecast (which is prudent due to several uncertainties outside the control of the College), includes a revised Group surplus of £1.4m
- The P6 current operational surplus was favourable to the budget mainly due to lower costs and staff vacancies.
- Financial Health is 'Good'. Cash balances and cash days are in line with forecasts.
- P7 Management Accounts will be published to Board shortly and these are showing an improved financial position.

Governors asked questions to which Susan and Jason responded:

How are vacancies in full time teaching staff impacting the student experience? Are gaps being filled with temporary staff or do other teachers have an increased workload?

The College employs a pool of occasional workers (usually on MKC Commercial contracts) who can cover temporary teaching gaps. We are also seeing a reduction in the number of vacancies across campus and prisons, so the position is improving. The CPR process is demonstrating that despite vacancies, the College is maintaining a strong 'Good' position.

Given the above explanation, why is the ratio of staff costs as a percentage of income above the sector benchmark?

Our KPI is 72% because the prisons ratio is 80-85% which distorts the numbers (one of the CEFSS recommendations is to separate prisons in our financial data to have a clearer view of the campus position). The staff costs/income ratio in the southeast is c.63%.

The Board approved the Budget reforecast for 2024/25 and the Period 6 Management Accounts

b) Curriculum Efficiency and Financial Sustainability Support (CEFSS)
(previously circulated as Paper 2.4B)

Minuted as confidential

c) 2025/26: Principles for the Budget *(previously circulated as Paper 2.4C)*

The Finance Group discussed the proposed principles at its recent meeting and concluded that this is a sustainable budget.

The aim is to achieve a surplus of 2% - 4% and maintain Good Financial Health. There is projected growth in 2025/26 (based on demographics) but 16-18 numbers are capped due to space constraints. The College will be carrying out more detailed modelling on growth projections over the next five years and beyond as the Council predicts 2,500 more college spaces will be needed by 2050. This modelling will support bids for further capital funding / Phases 2 and 3 of the Estates Plan.

The Board approved the principles for the 2025/26 budget

d) Finance Group Meeting 24th February 2025 *(previously circulated as Paper 2.4D)*

Mat Gotkowski referred the Board to the report of the meeting,

The Board approved the report of the meeting

3.0 GOVERNANCE AND COMPLIANCE

3.1 Capital Projects Monitoring Group (CPMG) meetings of 11th February and 11th March 2025 *(previously circulated as Papers 3.1A and 3.1B)*

Manish Verma referred to the report of the meeting. The CPMG has agreed to authorise two members to act on behalf of the group to make urgent decisions / give approvals. To speed decision making, the Group is further recommending that the Board delegates additional authority to the CPMG for the Carbon Offset project (delegated authority already given by written resolution for the Tarff project). In relation to the CTF project, the DfE requires the College to enter into a legal agreement giving a right of clawback for 30 years if certain conditions are not met (see Paper 4.2).

The Board:

- **Approved the report of the meeting**
- **Ratified the written resolution (Paper 3.1B) delegating authority to the CPMG to approve the specification listed in Section 13.3 of the Financial Regulations in relation to the Tariff project**
- **Delegated authority to the CPMG to approve the specification listed in Section 13.3 of the Financial Regulations in relation to the Carbon Offset project**

3.2 Search and Governance Committee meeting of 4th March 2025 (*previously circulated as Paper 3.2*)

Ian Revell referred to the report of the meeting. Following a survey, Board meetings will continue to be scheduled for Wednesdays at 5pm.

The Board:

- **approved the report of the meeting**
- **ratified the re-appointment of Mat Gotkowski and Manish Verma to serve a third (and final) term of office**
- **approved the amendments to the EDI Link Governor role description**

3.3 Items for the next meeting (30th April 2025)

- Curriculum Plan 2025/26
- EDI Annual report / Gender Pay report

4.0 CONSENT AGENDA

The following items were approved by consent / without discussion:

4.1 Whistleblowing Policy (*previously circulated as Paper 4.1*)

4.2 CTF Claw back agreement (*previously circulated as Paper 4.2*)

- **the Agreement including the terms and transactions contemplated**
- **the Chair of Governors and CEO (in her capacity as a governor), to execute the Agreement under seal**

4.3 Minutes of the last meeting (5th February 2025) (*previously circulated as Paper 4.3*)

Matters arising

Date Raised	Actions arising from the last and previous meetings	Action Owner	Current position
5/2/25	1. Include the increase in student spaces (numbers) in the CPMG report	JM	Complete – included in Paper 3.1
	2. Report on destinations in more detail	MF	Complete – included in Paper 2.3A
	3. Analyse maths feedback by protected characteristics	MF	Complete – included in Paper 2.3A
	4. Circulate APSG meeting notes to the Board	LB / SS	Complete (and ongoing) – uploaded to the Board portal
	5. Report previous actuals vs KPIs when presenting the Curriculum Plan for approval	MF	Carry forward to 30th April
11/12/24	1. Report student disciplinaries by type and ethnicity.	AL	Complete - agenda item 2.2

Next Meeting 30th April 2025 at 13:30 (followed by the Board's Annual Strategic Event)



Approved 30th April 2025
Ruby Parmar
Chair of Governors