

MILTON KEYNES COLLEGE GROUP
CORPORATION BOARD MEETING
Draft Minutes of the meeting held on 18th March 2026
Pitching Room, SCIoT, Bletchley
17:00 – 19:00

Board Members	Category of Governor	Attendance Record 2025/26	Present at this meeting
Sally Alexander	CEO	5 of 5	Sally Alexander
Jawad Al Midani (from 24.10.25)	Student	3 of 4	Jawad Al Midani (in part)
Richard Bartlett-Rawlings	Independent	5 of 5	Richard Bartlett-Rawlings
Ian Bickers	Independent	4 of 5	Ian Bickers (Teams) (in part)
Ajira Bouchada	Independent	3 of 5	Ajira Bouchada (Teams)
Emily Bousfield (from 29.9.25)	Staff	5 of 5	Emily Bousfield (in part)
Carla Derriscott (from 30.9.25)	Student	5 of 5	Carla Derriscott (in part)
Mark Homans	Independent	5 of 5	Mark Homans
Ajay Kabra	Independent	3 of 5	<i>Sent apologies</i>
Rebecca Myrie	Staff	5 of 5	Rebecca Myrie (in part)
Amit Nayyar	Independent	4 of 5	Amit Nayyar (Teams)
Hiran Odedra (from 2.10.25)	Independent	2 of 5	<i>Sent apologies</i>
Ruby Parmar	Independent	4 of 5	Ruby Parmar
Ian Revell	Independent	5 of 5	Ian Revell
Neil Sainsbury	Independent	4 of 5	<i>Sent apologies</i>
Lindsey Styles	Independent	5 of 5	Lindsey Styles
Manish Verma	Independent	4 of 5	<i>Sent apologies</i>
Jeremy Wilsdon	Independent	5 of 5	Jeremy Wilsdon
Tom Wraight	Independent	5 of 5	Tom Wraight (Teams) (in part)
Attendance % this meeting		79%	15 / 19
Attendance % year to date		87%	81 / 93

Regular Attendees at this meeting: Jason Mansell (Chief Operating Officer), Cat Marin (Executive Principal), Sharon Frost (Executive Director People Services and Marketing), Karen Brown (Head of Governance), Sam Samuels (Governance Partner)

Other attendees in part: Claire Atkins (Lead Director: Prison Services), Nathan Fynn (Group Director Quality and Standards), Amy Langford (Group Director: Inclusion), Susan Akhtar (Group Director of Finance), Liana Sinclair (Group Director: Estates) (Teams)

1.0 Procedural

1.1 Welcome and Apologies

Cat Marin, Claire Atkins and Nathan Flynn were welcomed to the meeting.

Apologies had been received from Neil Sainsbury, Hiran Odedra, Ajay Kabra and Manish Verma.

1.2 Declaration of Interests

Tom Wraight (item 5.1B).

2.0 Strategic Priorities 2025/26

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

Sally Alexander highlighted some items from her report:

Wave 1 Construction Technical Education Colleges (TECs)

- Wave One launched the Construction TECS (CTECS). The College bid to lead a CTEC but was unsuccessful and is therefore working as a partner ('spoke') organisation to lead on specific projects with North Kent College and Bedford College who are leading the CTECs for our area. We will support all strands but will lead on a strand to support learners studying construction programmes in prisons, to enter the workplace.

Wave 2 TECs

- Wave 2 TECs have been launched and will cover four priority sectors: Advanced Manufacturing, Clean Energy, Defence, and Digital & Technologies. The Further Education and Skills Alliance (FESA), a collaboration of seven colleges, has been established to strengthen collective influence across the Oxford–Cambridge Growth Corridor and has agreed to support each other's TEC submissions and avoid competing bids.
- MK College has submitted a bid to act as lead for Digital Technologies and to participate as a spoke in Advanced Manufacturing and Defence. The outcomes are expected in April.

Post 16 Capacity Funding

- Colleges can bid between £250k and £5million for eligible projects e.g. estate reconfiguration, temporary expansion (leasing/buying short-term space) and targeted additional space creation (not land purchases or new builds).

Construction Skills Capacity Funding

- Colleges can bid between £250k and £5million for eligible projects. Colleges can only bid for this funding if they are leading a CTEC hub or spoke.

Governors asked questions to which Sally responded:

Will the College be sharing the English and maths positive learner achievement outcomes with students, parents and staff.

Yes, national data shows that in terms of value added, the College is ranked 2nd in the country for English and 17th for maths (out of 155 providers). This excellent news will be shared widely when the data is formally published.

Action 1: Cat Marin by 30th April 2026

What are the financial implications of delivering projects as a 'spoke'?

Financial and delivery commitments have not been agreed at this stage. Formal commitments will only be made once delivery plans and associated funding are confirmed, allowing the College to determine the scale of its involvement and

ensure costs are fully covered. Participation in spoke projects will be limited to activity that aligns with the College's existing strategic priorities.

Why was the College unsuccessful in its bid to be a CTEC? Will this affect the bid to be a Digital TEC?

Historic construction achievement data meant the College did not meet the criteria at the time. The College does however meet the Digital TEC bid criteria which is based on historical, financial and success data as well as stakeholder engagement. Leading a TEC will elevate the College's profile, strengthen its influence, and create opportunities to engage directly with key stakeholders and partners along the growth corridor.

Who controls the funding distribution in a non-devolved authority area?

Applications are made directly to the DfE.

The Board received the CEO Report and Board Dashboard

Amit Nayyar left the meeting at 18:20

2.2 Prison Education (previously circulated as Paper 2.2)

Claire Atkins and Nathan Flynn led on this item and summarised some key headlines from the report:

Contract Management

- Mobilisation progressed broadly as planned. The consultation period was challenging but has now concluded, and the current focus is on supporting staff. Staff sickness is still adverse to target but is starting to improve with targeted interventions in place where needed.
- The prison contract is highly challenging but is being effectively managed through regular scrutiny of quality, finance and performance. While the contract itself is not learner centred-, the College's delivery is focused on quality and fairer futures, working closely with the College's Quality Team to ensure high standards for learners.
- Senior teams manage the contractual and operational risks leaving front line staff to focus on teaching. Compliance meetings with the MoJ have been positive, with feedback indicating that delivery is broadly meeting expectations.
- The MoJ's Curious 2 data system has only recently become available, so we are only now moving into active KPI management with the MoJ. Initial indications show performance in line with other providers.

Quality Strategy

- Quality processes are being standardised across campus and prisons including the Blueprint for Success (teaching and learning framework), lesson observations (MESMA), learning walks, Quality Improvement Plan processes, and the balanced scorecard model.
- The Ofsted judgement covers Education, Training and Skills however, the College is only accountable for Education. The recent introduction of the balanced scorecard to prisons, monitored at the Prisons Quality Forums (PQFs), is significant, as the scorecard focuses exclusively on performance and improvement actions within the College's direct control.

Overall, the Executive is confident in the ability to deliver quality outcomes and manage financial risk as the contract matures.

Governors asked questions to which Claire and Nathan responded:

Are the providers collaborating to improve quality across prison education provision?

Yes. The contract includes explicit requirements relating to collaboration and innovation. There is a structured framework of local, regional and national forums which bring together the quality leads from all providers, alongside representatives from the MoJ and HMPPS, to share practice and drive collective improvement. Ofsted is also expected to participate in future meetings (Saul Pope, His Majesty's Inspector and ex Milton Keynes College Prisons Quality Lead), is leading on this for Ofsted. An example of innovation and social value is the College's leadership role in 'Supporting Ex-Offenders into Construction through Prison Sector Partnerships' for which the College is being funded.

Does the College maintain records of learners who are not released to attend classes?

Yes. This is monitored through learner attendance registers recorded in Curious 2.

The Board discussed progress and received assurance on the delivery of the Prison Education contract. A regular update on progress will be given in the CEO report.

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

2.3 Student Experience

2.3A Careers (previously circulated as Paper 2.3A)

Amy Langford and Rebecca Myrie led on this item and summarised some key headlines from the report:

- Careers is a key priority within the new Strategy 2026 – 2031. Progress has been made since the last report to the Board in March 2025.
- External assurance, confirming that the College is meeting its obligations for careers, is strong including peer-to-peer reviews (engagement with other colleges) and a three-yearly external Matrix assessment (the next one is scheduled in June).
- The central careers team (4.3 FTE posts) includes specialist careers advisors who have defined areas of expertise including apprenticeships, SEND, care pathways- and apprenticeships (and a developing focus on adults and HE). Given the scale and diversity of learners, the team targets support for learners who are most in need of specialist intervention.
- Alongside the central team, careers advice and guidance is embedded across the curriculum (careers advice is a metric in the CPR process – see item 2.3B). Industry specific careers guidance is delivered by tutors and progress mentors who understand their learners and can refer students for onetoone support where required. This model ensures careers guidance is widely dispersed and not limited to specialist interventions however delivering high quality personalised career advice at scale is a challenge especially as there is a shortage of Level 6qualified careers advisers.

- The national [Gatsby Benchmarks for Good Career Guidance](#) have been updated with revised descriptions and criteria including a requirement that alumni are used to support the careers programme.

Governors asked questions to which Amy and Rebecca responded:

The specialist team is small, but what is the ideal model?

Tutors know the pathways and have the industry contacts. The Careers Lead works with the Personal Development Leads and Progress Mentors whilst the central team ensures compliance and provides specialist support.

What feedback have you received from students? Does the advice and guidance make a difference?

Evidence is being gathered through a survey. At the last Board meeting, A Level students reported that they would like access to careers advice covering a wider range of options, not solely university routes.

The Board challenged the College to strengthen its approach to careers guidance:

- A small specialist careers team cannot realistically deliver personalised support at scale particularly to the ‘middle-majority’ of students who do not actively seek support. The College should review how technology and external platforms could be better utilised e.g. a ‘digital first, human touch’ model where high-quality digital tools serve the majority of learners, with specialist human support targeted at those with more complex needs (an example was shared of a digital platform currently used in schools). Many learners may prefer an app-based solution rather than a traditional face-to-face intervention.
- Further work is needed to integrate careers activity, curriculum design and employer engagement and to better understand the full extent of careers activity delivered across the College (including by CTLs and progress mentors), whether careers provision is of the right quality, the involvement of alumni and how student voice is directly informing improvement. This will provide evidence of meeting the Gatsby benchmarks.
- Given the strategic importance of careers, there needs to be more evidence of impact e.g. intended and actual destination data, to demonstrate that careers guidance leads to positive progression outcomes.

The Board discussed and received assurance on Careers

Ian Bickers left the meeting

2.3B Quality and Standards *(previously circulated as Paper 2.3B)*

Nathan Flynn led on this item and summarised some key headlines from his report:

Prison Education

- The new Prisons PQF was reported in item 2.2

Campus Curriculum Progress Review (CPR3) and Campus Quality Improvement Plan (QIP)

Overall, the performance at CPR3 provides assurance that targeted interventions are in place, early performance indicators are generally positive, and focus is being maintained in priority risk areas.

- The CPR3 aggregated result represents a small overall decline of 0.3 (from 2.7 at CPR2 to 3.0). A score of 3 represents 'expected' standard in Ofsted terms. This decline was anticipated at this point of the CPR cycle (reflecting the focus of CPR3 on compliance).
- Engineering remains at a Grade 5 i.e. intervention status reflecting primarily Higher Education (HE) performance (which is a small proportion of overall provision). Further Education (FE) engineering is performing in line with other curriculum areas. Early indicative BTEC Level 3 engineering results show positive progress, with outcomes currently 8% above last year. The intervention status is not an indication of declining performance but ensures sustained oversight and assurance, given the strategic importance of engineering.
- Apprenticeships have moved from a Grade 2 to a Grade 4 (needing attention), largely due to capacity risks following a leadership vacancy. Performance is assessed as operating at Grade 3 (expected standard), with mitigations in place including additional funding, backfill arrangements and enhanced quality support. Further improvement is anticipated, with upcoming reviews expected to evidence progress.
- Attendance remains a key challenge and is below internal targets, although the College is performing positively compared to local providers.
- Overall retention is tracking 2.5% higher than at the same point last year; high retention should have a positive impact on outcomes.
- Maths outcomes continue to improve following November GCSE results. As reported in the CEO report, maths progress scores for 2024/25 place the College in 17th place nationally (out of 155 providers), i.e. top 11%.

The Board challenged the current position with apprenticeships:

- Achievement rates for the year to date are c.42-44%, and the target of 68% is considered achievable. The national benchmark is approximately 67% however, the College is ambitious and intends to push above sector benchmarks. Some factors affecting achievement are outside the College's control.
- Recruitment, and consequently funding, is below target reflecting external challenges (e.g. employer priorities).
- Internal issues largely relate to timeliness (end point assessments), staff workload and induction of new staff. Governors were assured on data accuracy and compliance.
- External support has been sought from the FE Commissioner's team however the College's performance does not warrant active support (indicating relative strength when benchmarked against the sector).

Governors agreed that the new Executive Principal needed to gain a detailed understanding of the College's apprenticeship provision including clarity on the standards delivered, levels, learner numbers and historical performance against targets, before finalising an action plan,

Action 3: Cat Marin by 3rd June

Governors asked Nathan:

What are the issues with the accuracy and timeliness of data recording – does this reflect system limitations, workload pressures, or incorrect data entry?

The vocational tracker, which is functioning as intended, provides automated prompts where deadlines are missed. Errors are more commonly related to incorrect input rather than non-completion.

The CPR process sets high expectations including 'right first time'. Compliance issues may arise where staff are unfamiliar with systems and requirements and require further guidance.

The Board received and discussed the current performance of schools at CPR3 and progress against the campus QIP

2.3C Report from the Curriculum & Quality Group meeting of 2nd March 2026
(previously circulated as Paper 2.3C)

Jez Wilsdon referred to the report of the meeting when the Committee had received an update on quality and inspection readiness. The Group had been assured that the College is engaging with new Ofsted inspection toolkits, with early exposure through prison education and initial teacher training providing valuable insight. Positive progress was highlighted in relation to inclusion work (including the new Blueprint for Inclusion), which aligns with Ofsted priorities.

Challenge was raised regarding A Level performance, with predicted outcomes currently not meeting the College's aspiration to be within the top 10% of providers nationally however there are actions in place and no complacency.

The Board approved the report of the CQG meeting on 2 March 2027

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

2.4 Financial Health

Susan Akhtar led on these items and summarised some key headlines from the reports.

2.4A Budget Reforecast 2025/26 *(previously circulated as Paper 2.4A)*

- The headline position is an improved forecast surplus of £3.961m compared to the original budgeted surplus of £2.268m. Income has been added which was not confirmed when the Board approved the budget in July 2025 and some income has been reduced (e.g. apprenticeships income due to below target recruitment).
- Contingencies have been released where possible, but the reforecast surplus remains subject to both opportunities and risks (detailed in the report); decisions on these will be taken later in the year.
- Forecast cash balances are approximately £24m, which includes around £2.5m of restricted cash held on account for specific purposes.
- The Financial Health forecast is 'Outstanding', (the original forecast was 'Good'). As discussed with the Finance Group, the College is aiming for a 'strong Good' with due regard to quality and investment priorities.

The Board approved the budget reforecast for 2025/26

2.4B Management Accounts Period 6 (January 2026) *(previously circulated as Paper 2.4B)*

The financial position at Period 6 (January 2026) includes:

- A year-to-date surplus of £2.3m, marginally behind reforecast but within expectations (timing differences)
- Cash balances of £22.7m
- Capital expenditure of £0.37m, with further spend committed.
- Financial Health; Outstanding.

The Board approved the P6 Management Accounts

Amit Nayyar arrived at 18:25

2.4C Budget Reforecast 2025/26 (previously circulated as Paper 2.4C)

- The 2026/27 budget assumptions was presented, including student number planning, curriculum mix, pay and capital assumptions, and financial health indicators. A draft budget will be reviewed by the Finance Group prior to the Board meeting in July.
- Key assumptions include a Group surplus of 2-4%, a pay award of 3-4% (in line with inflation) subject to affordability, baseline capital expenditure of £0.5m (excluding leases and externally funded projects), and continued investment aligned to strategic priorities.
- Key risks include student recruitment and retention, apprenticeship income shortfalls, pay pressures above inflation, prisons income volatility, and investment requirements associated with ongoing developments in AI and new technologies.
- Scenario modelling will be included in the budget paper in July. A detailed review of apprenticeship provision is underway, including analysis of national policy changes and programmes at risk of defunding. The Board supported extending this scenario-based approach to include Higher Education and A-levels, recognising similar external uncertainties.
- There had been a positive discussion with the Finance Group about financial health, with agreement on strong 'Good' rather than 'Outstanding' to enable continued investment in priority areas.
- Governors were encouraged to take up the offer from the Group Director of Finance to go through the College reports recognising the Board's collective responsibility to understand and challenge the assumptions underpinning the forecasts.

The Board challenged the proposed surplus, accumulation of reserves and aligning financial decisions to the strategy. The forthcoming Annual Strategic Event (ASE) will provide an opportunity to consider the Strategic Plan alongside the Estates Plan and other investment priorities including the learner experience, people, and wider organisational priorities. This should determine the level of surplus which then needs to be targeted.

It was noted that the College's strong financial position and effective financial controls, place it in a comparatively robust position e.g. enabling it to budget prudently for a pay award broadly in line with inflation or access capital funding where match funding is required. Despite government commitments to align FE pay with schools, subsequent funding announcements have fallen short and without this level of financial resilience, such a pay award would not be possible.

The Audit & Risk Committee will be reviewing the Reserves Policy at its next meeting.

The Board approved the budget principles for the 2026/27

Amit Nayyar joined the meeting in person

2.4D Report from the Finance Group Meeting on 23rd February 2025/26 (previously circulated as Paper 2.4D)

Ajay Kabra was not present at the meeting but had submitted a summary of Paper 2.4D, which was read out by the Head of Governance. The Finance Group reported a productive discussion on year-to-date performance, progress against reforecast targets, and the assumptions within the three-year financial forecast. The Group emphasised the importance of ongoing monitoring and timely reporting of risks and opportunities to the Board. Confidence was also expressed in the implementation timelines for new finance system.

The Board approved the report from the Finance Group meeting on 23rd February 2026

Susan was thanked for attending and she left the meeting

3.0 GOVERNANCE AND COMPLIANCE

3.1 Search & Governance Committee Meeting 3rd March 2026 (previously circulated as Paper 3.1)

Ian Revell referred to the report of the meeting and highlighted:

- Suitable candidates are currently held in the recruitment pipeline for when vacancies arise in the future.
- It was agreed that there should be no exceptions for completing mandatory training. Although safeguarding training may be undertaken in other educational contexts, the College's training includes adult learners.
- The Committee reviewed the new Ofsted standards for Leadership & Governance. The current self-assessment is rated amber, with further actions planned. Awareness training is planned for 6 May, and full attendance is encouraged. There is a particular focus on Link Governor engagement and under the new standards, clear evidence of impact is required. As current reporting arrangements were considered insufficient and therefore rated red, a revised template for recording visits has been circulated to ensure impact is clearly evidenced.

The Board approved the report from the S&G meeting on 3rd March

3.2 Capital Projects Monitoring Group 10 February and 10 March 2026 (previously circulated as Paper 3.2)

No comments were made.

The Board approved the report from the CPMG meetings on 10 February and 10 March 2026

3.2 Items for the next meeting 6th May 2027

Board (short meeting)

- Curriculum Vision for 2026/27
- EDI and Ethnicity Annual Report 25/26 / Gender & Ethnicity Pay Gap Report
- Student Experience: Outcomes (CPR4) / Student Survey (C)
- Community Impact Report (C)
- Safeguarding Policy (C)

- Annual Strategic Event (ASE)
- Meeting(s) with Students
 - Board Development
 - Sector challenges and Opportunities
 - Ofsted and governance
 - Implementing the Strategic Plan 2026 - 2031

4.0 CONSENT AGENDA

The following items were approved by consent / without discussion:

4.1 Policies for Approval (previously circulated as Paper 4.1A)

The Board approved the following policies:

4.1A: Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblowing)

4.1B: Fees (FE) 2026/27

4.1C: Fees (HE) 2026/27

4.1D: Complaints (FE)

4.1E: Complaints (HE)

4.1F: Consultation Procedures for obtaining the views of Staff and Students

4.1G: Board of Governors Complaints against the Corporation

4.1H: Board of Governors Obtaining Independent Professional Advice for Board Members

4.1I: Board of Governors Recruitment and Reappointment

4.1J: Board of Governors Training and Development

4.2 Minutes of the last meeting (4th February 2026) (previously circulated as Papers 4.2A and Confidential 4.2B).

Matters arising

4/2/26	1. Active engagement of governors with partners (Prevent) - research best practice and seek clarification from the DfE	AL / KB	Complete. A response was received from the DfE and passed on to the Link Governors.
	2. Respond to students on the points raised at the meeting.	RM	Complete – included in Paper 2.1
	3. Circulate an analysis of the careers fair for Public Services including student feedback	RM	Complete – included in Paper 2.3A
	4. Create an opportunity for governors to meet with students in their own environment.	RM / KB	Carry Forward – planned for 6th May – all governors invited
10/12/25	1. Benchmark A Level predictions against 2024/25 published achievement of local providers and report to the January CQG.	NF	Complete – included in Paper 2.3B
	3. Report on the percentage of students who start an apprenticeship at the College actually complete their apprenticeship.	NF	Complete – Anna Clarke met with Jez Wilsdon to review.
	6. Review space used by third parties as part of the Estates Strategy	JM	Carry Forward: Include in the Estates Strategy (Board 3rd June 2026)

Next Meeting 6th May 2026

Staff Governors and Student Governors were thanked for attending and they left the meeting.

5.1 Confidential Item: Estates Strategy (1)

Minuted as confidential

Tom Wraight was thanked for attending and he left the meeting.

5.2 Confidential Item: Estates Strategy (2)

Minuted as confidential

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R Parmar', written in a cursive style.

Approved 6th May 2026
Ruby Parmar
Chair of Governors