The Manchester College
be amazing

The Manchester College Board

Minutes of the meeting held on 25th November 2025 at 9:30am at Openshaw (OP-105)

Present	Dame Ann Limb (Chair), Cllr Garry Bridges (Governor), Philip Johnson (Governor), Rachel Curry (Principal) and Rhona Bradley (Governor Safeguarding Designated Lead for item 9).
Apologies	Justice Ellis (Co-optee Governor), Catherine Hill (Co-optee Governor) and Barry Atkins (Deputy Principal)
In Attendance	Debbie Sanderson (Vice Principal Resources, Planning & Performance), Michael Walsh (Deputy Principal: Adult Curriculum and Student Support), Helen Ashley Taylor (Director of Governance and Company Secretary), Sarah-Jane Gilmore (Deputy Company Secretary), Mark Harris (Vice Principal Adult & Vice Dean), Michelle Fletcher (Vice Principal – TMC Quality), Orla Wood (Divisional Finance Director – College and Income Team), Marie Stock (Vice Principal Student Experience and Support) Stuart Steen (Vice Principal FE), and Yetunde D. Olabode (Governance and Legal Advisor)

PART A

The meeting opened at 09:30 and was quorate with at least 3 Governors present	
1	**Apologies** Apologies were received for Justice Ellis, Catherine Hill and Barry Atkins (Deputy Principal). The Board was informed of arrangements to ensure quoracy by bringing Items 9 and 8 forward. The Board also noted that Mark Fletcher had temporarily stepped back from The Manchester College (TMC) board.
2	**Declarations of Interest** The Board noted a conflict of interest for Cllr Garry Bridges regarding item 12 and noted that no new declarations of interest or loyalty were made to the standing register of interests or in relation to any specific agenda items.
3	**Minutes of the Previous Meeting** The minutes of the meeting on the 14th of October 2025 were approved as a true and accurate record of the meeting.
4	**Matters Arising** The Board noted the ongoing actions. The Board acknowledged the Chair's tenure and contribution to leadership, student involvement, and the organisation, including national advocacy for FE. The Board recognised the Chair's commitment to maintaining future relationships with the organisation. The outgoing Chair reflected on the role's significance, organisational support, and achievements, including Ofsted, while expressing plans to maintain Manchester connections. The Principal expressed gratitude for the chair's support, guidance, and commitment, noting their effective joint leadership during their concurrent appointments. The Board welcomed the incoming Chair, noting the internal continuity and expressing confidence in the future leadership.
Hilda Koon, Jessica Lau, James Lewis and Amina Sheikh joined the meeting at 09:44am	
5	**Item 5 - Curriculum: Presentation from Department – ESOL 16-18 and Adult** The Board was informed that the presentation would focus on curriculum volume and impact. The ESOL curriculum was redesigned to include English, Maths, digital skills, and vocational progression routes aligned to student aspirations and local labour market needs. ESOL provision was delivered across multiple sites for 16–18 and adult learners, with levels ranging from pre-entry to Level 1 and GCSE. The Board noted the diverse cohort and high proportion of learners at lower entry levels. Achievement rates were strong, with minor retention challenges for adult male learners owing to work commitments and housing movement. The

	curriculum intent emphasised skill development, progress, progression, partnership, and positioning. Students progressed in-year based on subject strengths, with progression paths including higher and further education, employment, and personal development. The department maintained partnerships with students, teachers, curriculum areas, and external employers. The team worked from an asset-based perspective, viewing learners' multilingual abilities as advantages. The Board noted ongoing work to strengthen interpreting pathways and continued digital skills delivery despite qualification changes. The Board was informed that the curriculum model was adaptive and innovative, with regular timetable revisions and diverse delivery methods. The Board noted that initial guidance was required due to students' limited understanding of UK education and labour market pathways and noted the Progression Advisory Board supporting curriculum alignment. The department sought to broaden curriculum offerings, strengthen digital skills, enhance progression routes, and expand the capacity for citywide demand. The Board noted the social impact, including improved confidence and transition from requiring interpretation to providing it for the family. They noted another case of an ESOL learner who became a GCSE mathematics teacher. The Board was informed of the evolution of ESOL provision, including hybrid models enabling accelerated pathways for learners with varying educational backgrounds. Examples showed that learners quickly transitioned to interpreting roles through flexible programme design. Employer partnerships informed curriculum development and assessment, with partners offering employment opportunities and new collaborations with a BBC software engineer, strengthening digital delivery. The Board received an overview of social impact work, noting that learners reported increased independence, confidence in public systems, and the ability to support their families. Although social impact is difficult to measure quantitatively, qualitative evidence demonstrates meaningful change. The department was exploring the Social Value Portal for measurements. The Board discussed the curriculum's next steps, with plans to engage TMC leaders to support progression opportunities and seek employer contacts to widen learner access routes. Board members were asked to support where they could by providing employer contacts in schools, hospitality, care, warehousing, and other sectors valuing multilingual skills. The Board was invited to provide developmental feedback and consider mentoring opportunities. Members who visited ESOL provision reported positive feedback on teaching, digital access and progression support. Regarding employment opportunities, although small successes have been achieved, support from larger employers would be valuable. The Board agreed to share relevant contacts, including schools and major employers. **Action: Board members to supply employer contacts to support learner progression.** **Delegate: Board Members via Governance Team and Principalship** **Date: 31st March 2026** The Board concluded the item by expressing appreciation for the inspiring presentation and acknowledging the depth, breadth, and ambition of the evolving curriculum.
6	**Item 6: Principal's Overview including Scorecard and Risk Summary (Pay Negotiations)** [REDACTED]
Hilda Koon, Jessica Lau, James Lewis and Amina Sheikh left the meeting at 10:29am Rhona Bradley joined the meeting at 10:30am	
7	**Item 9: Safeguarding** The Board noted the key points summarised by the safeguarding lead. The safeguarding structure and processes for 2024–25 were externally scrutinised during the Ofsted inspection and deemed effective. Mental health remained the highest category of referrals, with 92% from the 16–18 cohort and 8% from adult learners. Increases in certain behaviours were partly attributed to strengthened internal reporting and tracking processes. Staff and student voices on safeguarding support have been positive, with improved outcomes for care-experienced students, including a reduction of the attendance gap to 1%, due to designated teacher roles working with virtual schools. Community tensions rose across the city during the summer, continuing externally into the current year's first term. While 2024–25 was comparatively calm from a safeguarding perspective, the first term presented an increase in high-risk situations linked to national and global events. The College continued to strengthen its preventative education and safeguarding culture. Increased reporting reflects positive engagement among students and staff. The forthcoming Safeguarding, Mental Health, and Wellbeing Strategy Group meeting will focus on Prevent. The Board noted effective partnerships with the City Council, virtual schools, and external agencies.

	The Board discussed the revised safeguarding and pastoral structure and queried whether realignment would risk separating safeguarding responsibilities from pastoral support. The Board sought assurance that staff maintained professional curiosity across needs, particularly in cases involving mental health, well-being, and safeguarding concerns. It was confirmed that under the new structure, referrals were triaged by team leaders and heads, ensuring that appropriate practitioners responded based on the assessed risk. The Board learned that the model enabled clarity, avoided overlap, and ensured that support could be escalated or reduced as needs evolved. The Board noted that mental health and wellbeing practitioners were at full caseload due to increased demand, but the six-week support model helped build resilience and retain educational engagement. The Board discussed the distinction between mental health and well-being issues and safeguarding concerns. The introduction of the emotional health and wellbeing team, trained by the NHS, enabled a more nuanced assessment and appropriate case allocation. The Board was assured that cross-team monitoring and collaboration prevented inappropriate labelling and ensured that the underlying causes were understood. **Recommendation: The Board then resolved to approve The Manchester College Safeguarding Annual Report 2024/25.** The Board thanked the safeguarding lead and governor for their input.
Rhona Bradley left the meeting at 10:43am	
8	**Item 8: Quality Update – 2025/26** The Board was informed that the performance scorecard provided assurance of TMC's position within the LTE Group reporting framework. The Board noted that the scorecard, aligned across Group business units, showed strong performance for 2024–25 in terms of achievement rates, destinations, and staff engagement. English outcomes remained above national rates for GCSE, while maths continued to be lower than the national rates, and a collaborative quality improvement project with the LTE Group Quality Team and the TMC Quality team was focusing on GCSE maths provision, particularly considering external best practice. The Board noted that upcoming external factors, including the new white paper, would influence future English and maths delivery models. The scorecard was under review due to changes in the Ofsted framework and the forthcoming LTE Group strategy. Updated targets, presentation adjustments, and alignment to the new inspection methodology were introduced during the year, with a settled format expected the following year. Cross-college learning walks were undertaken, with impact and follow-up activities included in the report. The Board noted that rapid intervention and support were being implemented for Animal Care and Foundation and BASE12 provision, with follow-up reviews set for early December. Bespoke training and departmental CPD approaches continued to develop, replacing the previous uniform cross-college model. The Ofsted framework renewal prompted the adaptation of internal quality assurance, including now thematic reviews of Level 3 work experience, curriculum intent for knowledge, skills, and behaviours, and PFA targets for learners with EHCPs, following inspection recommendations. The Board discussed the early stages of the renewed Ofsted methodology and noted that senior leaders, who were also inspectors, had opened their calendars for potential inspections after Christmas. Pilot approaches indicated a shift towards thematic reviews in addition to Inspection Focus Areas (previously deep dives), with QA processes realigned accordingly. Enhancements for the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) had strengthened since the previous meeting, with 13 enhancement measures and three Area for Improvements (AFIs) included, alongside targeted actions for the priority areas. The Board questioned the root-cause analysis of maths performance and received assurance that a deeper diagnostic exercise was planned within the new quality project. The Board noted feedback from sector leaders at the Association of Colleges (AoC) conference, including national challenges and the absence of quick solutions. Progress models embedded over multi-year periods have shown improved outcomes. The Board discussed the school-to-college transition impacts, initial assessment limitations, and meeting students at their starting point. The Board learned that the national study of high-performing GCSE resit provision in FE colleges would report in February to inform practice. The Board noted the importance of maintaining quality focus despite sectoral changes. A future update on English and math curriculum and assessment reforms will be provided at the next meeting, given their implications for delivery and progression. The Board agreed that members should receive a reform summary for strategic oversight.

	Action: The Deputy and Vice Principals FE to provide a future overview of curriculum changes relating to English and maths and qualification reform more generally at a future Board meeting **Delegate: Deputy Principal FE** **Date: In the 2026 board cycle (following the outcome of the national consultation on qualification reform)** It was noted that amendments had been made to the QIP following discussions at the previous meeting, and the Board acknowledged that enhancement measures reflected the appropriate ambition for the College's continued improvement journey. **Recommendation: The Board then resolved to approve The Manchester College Quality Update paper.**
Edward Lack and Marie Stock left the meeting at 11:04am	
9	**Item 6: Principal's Overview including Scorecard and Risk Summary** The Board was informed of significant national policy developments reshaping the external landscape for colleges, including the Post-16 Education White Paper and curriculum assessment review. These changes are expected to influence curriculum delivery and the strategic positioning of further education providers. The College was reviewing the white paper and anticipated substantial curriculum changes based on the assessment review. The transfer of responsibility for further education from the Department for Education to the Department for Work and Pensions represented a policy shift that was likely to influence adult education. The Board discussed these implications and acknowledged the need to monitor the effects closely. The Board was informed of lobbying activity concerning adult education funding, including work by the Association of Colleges, correspondence to the Greater Manchester Combined Authority, and local initiatives to influence funding for adult education provision. The Board was notified that pay negotiations concluded successfully with trade unions, resulting in the acceptance of a consolidated pay award and measures to support lower-paid staff. The Board was informed that the risk register review recommended no changes to the residual risk ratings this quarter. The Board noted that additional controls had been applied to social and political event risks due to global tensions and their potential impact on student behaviour. The Board questioned the residual rating for post-16 capacity, observing that the inherent risk remained high due to demographic growth and migration. The Board sought clarification on whether the residual risk should remain minor or not. It was confirmed that extensive mitigations, including growth funding, subcontracting, external facilities, and estate planning, had significantly reduced operational impact for the current and next academic year. The Board was informed that the wider city-region risk persisted and continued to be raised by local authorities. The Council had re-commissioned a sufficiency review, and the rising numbers in Greater Manchester were attracting national attention. The Board acknowledged that longer-term risks would be considered within the developing estate strategy once the impact of qualification reform was known and agreed that the mitigations in place justified the residual rating for the time being but noted the importance of retaining visibility of this matter due to its broader regional significance.
Break 11:30 – 11:41am Ann Limb left the meeting.	
10	**Item 7: Strategic Plan Key Performance Metrics Outturn for 24/25 and Targets** The Board were apprised of the proposed performance indicators and targets for 2025–26, alongside a scorecard showing trends for 2023/24, 2024/25, and recommended targets for 2025/26. The Board noted that the indicators represented measures monitored by the Divisional Board and aligned with the LTE Group Corporate Scorecard. It was noted that targets were informed by group-level expectations, accountability requirements, and external benchmark data, including sector averages and staff survey comparators. The Board reviewed the adjustments and removals within the target set outlined in this paper. The Board discussed whether the proposed targets were sufficiently ambitious or risked being easily achievable. The Board was informed that some indicators contained a modest stretch; for example, positive destinations, while others represented a return to previous performance levels as the performance was already strong. The Board noted that overall achievement rates remained exceptionally high, approaching or exceeding 90%, with maintaining such performance being a significant ask. The Board was advised that while certain indicators showed stability rather than an increase, the ambition for improvement remained embedded within departmental plans and the quality enhancement framework.

	The Board questioned the value of establishing longer-term aspirational targets in addition to annual operational targets. The Board noted that many public-sector scorecards included aspirational measures not expected to be achieved annually but signaled future ambitions. The Board discussed incorporating future-focused indicators aligned to the College's strategic enhancement plan and vision of moving provision from "strong" towards exemplary practice. The Board agreed that there would be merit in exploring how future targets could reflect longer-term aspirations, noting that the quality enhancement plan already contained multi-year ambitions. The Board noted that curriculum areas such as English, maths, music, and construction had specific stretch embedded within departmental performance expectations. The Board acknowledged that some areas may retain steady-state targets (for example, achievement rates already in the 90% range), while others warranted continued upward pressure. This differentiated approach ensured that ambition remained proportionate without undermining realism. Alignment with the LTE Group scorecard targets would continue, with the cross-reference column indicating where group-level indicators applied. The Board discussed the proposed targets and confirmed that they had been reviewed at the Group level and were consistent with corporate requirements. **Recommendation: The Board then resolved to approve The Manchester College Key Performance Indicators and targets proposed for the 2025/26 on the scorecard.**
11	**Item 10: Performance Report Resources** The Board noted that the overall performance remained positive and that highlighted items had been flagged for further discussion. The Board was apprised that no RIDDOR-reportable incidents had occurred and that health and safety trends continued to be favourable when compared with equivalent points in the previous year. The Board was informed that work was underway to improve the reporting of near misses and ensure consistency in categorisation across sites. The Board noted that the Joint College/Trade Union Health and Safety Committee had recently reviewed these matters and that the area continued to receive the appropriate oversight. The estate and capacity updates showed that both phases of recent estate developments had settled well. Minor issues, including white wall finishes and access control adjustments, were resolved. Student standards across new and existing areas remained high, with no difference between Phase 1 and Phase 2 spaces. The Board discussed pressures relating to communal spaces, particularly at Openshaw and Wythenshawe, with concerns about congestion during wet weather and its impact on neurodiverse learners and those with access needs. Options for weather-proof outdoor spaces and enhanced indoor layouts were developed for leadership review. The Board was apprised of the declining demand for Advanced Learner Loans, a national trend, although alternative funding routes had offset some of the decline. The Board queried whether reduced loan uptake might restrict Greater Manchester's skills pipeline. This issue was discussed by the GM College Deputies Group, and it was commented that Access to HE learners retained favourable loan write-off conditions for higher-education progression. The Board learned that 16–18 enrolment exceeded the target at census, with DfE approval for in-year growth funding to support additional learners. Regarding T-Level enrolment, uptake remained variable due to specialised pathways, where few 16-year-olds committed to specific occupational fields. The Board noted national BTEC defunding delays and discussed then new V-Level qualifications, questioning their adequacy as BTEC replacements, given the requirement to combine multiple one-A-level-equivalent qualifications. The sector has expressed concerns about destinations and feasibility. The College was preparing its consultation response, with a detailed update planned for March on curriculum reform implications. **Action: The Deputy and Vice Principals FE to provide a future overview of curriculum changes relating to English and maths and qualification reform more generally at a future Board meeting** **Delegate: Deputy Principal FE** **Date: In the 2026 board cycle (following the outcome of the national consultation on qualification reform)** The Board noted improved attendance, particularly in English and maths, which exceeded vocational curriculum attendance. The revised attendance strategy, which focused on early intervention and inclusion support, contributed positively. English high-grade outcomes increased from 19.9% to 24%, with higher November re-sit pass rates in both English and maths.

	The Board was informed that staff turnover remained stable and showed no concerning patterns. It was highlighted that voluntary turnover was aligned with the same period last year, potentially reflecting improvements in pay, conditions, culture, and engagement activities. The Board noted that early warning indicators continued to be monitored and that interventions were deployed when necessary. The Board discussed finances, noting that contribution remained close to the budget with no material concerns. Income and cost levels were closely monitored due to differences in enrolment timing. The approved in-year growth funding provides additional financial assurance. When asked about whether sector-wide financial instability, such as at the University of Dundee, had local implications, no comparable risks emerged through the latest review. The Board received updates on capital projects and noted the 20% reduction in the GM Local Growth Fund capital equipment allocation. Consequently, the College removed the media studio enhancement from its capital plan, reducing the number of learner commitments. Engineering facilities remained the priority focus, with ongoing GMCA discussions. The Board concluded the item noting that, despite external pressures and changes within the wider educational landscape, the College maintained a strong operational and financial position with targeted plans in place to address emerging risks.
12	**Item 11: Student, Staff and Stakeholder Voice (SSV)** The Board was informed that the model incorporated feedback from students, parents, carers, employers, and staff, reflecting the wider expectations of the renewed inspection framework. The Board noted that Ofsted's methodology continued to emphasise stakeholder engagement, including discussions with learners, teachers, managers, parents, and employers. The College's SSV strategy was designed to mirror these expectations, ensuring that stakeholder views were systematically captured and acted upon. The Board was informed that extensive SSV activity had occurred over the past year, including cross-college focus groups covering 87 classes and engaging more than 1,000 students across various provision types. The Board noted that feedback on teaching quality was particularly strong, with QDP learner survey results showing performance significantly above the national benchmarks in most categories. The College had strengthened its feedback loops, ensuring that actions from student voice activities were clearly evidenced, with examples provided in the paper. The Board was informed that parent engagement had expanded through a new survey, attracting 528 responses. While noting that further reach would be desirable in future years, the Board welcomed the high satisfaction levels reported and reviewed the positive comments received, as referenced on page 140. The concerns raised in the survey were addressed promptly. Benchmark comparisons for the parent responses were similarly favourable. The Board discussed the digital systems available to parents for accessing learner information and queried whether improvements were needed. Parents in schools were accustomed to sophisticated online portals enabling real-time access to progress and behaviour data, while the College relied mainly on manual communication through letters, emails and calls. The Board noted that work was underway with Group colleagues to explore a parent-access portal to improve engagement and accessibility. The Board also noted the need for systems to remain inclusive of parents with limited digital literacy or English skills. The Board sought clarification on engaging with ESOL parents following the ESOL curriculum presentation. The Board learned that many 16-18 ESOL learners in local authority care were supported through Manchester's Virtual School for parental engagement. For other ESOL learners, engagement challenges were complicated by language barriers and unfamiliarity with the UK education system. A diverse staff team, including interpreters, worked with families and community networks to improve communication. The Board agreed that engaging with parents of ESOL students should remain a focus area. The College planned to identify and monitor parents who missed parents' evenings or key communications. This study aimed to strengthen safeguarding and identify learners who lack adequate home support. The Board was informed that a cross-referenced vulnerability dataset would be developed, incorporating attendance, EHCP status, disciplinary records, criminal convictions (where appropriate), care experience, and other indicators to identify the risks and patterns. The Board welcomed this integrated approach to the challenge. The Board concluded the item by noting the progress made since the SSV model was introduced and acknowledging the strength, breadth, and impact of the current stakeholder engagement practice. **Recommendation: The Board then resolved to approve The Manchester College Student and Stakeholder Voice Update paper**

13	**Any Other Business – Partnership Proposal TMC and Factory** The Board was informed that a quorum could not be maintained as one member was unable to join the meeting. The Board discussed implications and agreed to proceed via written resolution for timely approval. **Action: Governance Team to prepare and issue a written resolution for approval of the new proposed partnership and subcontract with Factory International** **Delegate: Governance and Legal Advisor** **Date: 5th December 2025**
ESOL students and Sukhjeet Rai joined the meeting at 12:48pm	
14	**Working Lunch with Students** The Board opened the working lunch session with apologies from the TMC Chair. ESOL learners shared experiences representing diverse levels and campuses in the study. Students described their programmes, noting their progression through ESOL levels after starting with minimal English. The Board observed their improved confidence, English proficiency, and understanding of workplace expectations during the programme. Group activities accelerated learning, although students faced challenges with spoken assessments. Learners appreciated the staff's patience and personalised feedback. Students described ESOL's social impact through improved confidence in daily life, public service engagement, and work experience. They reported building cross-cultural friendships and communicating with confidence. The Board discussed students' teaching aspirations, emphasising support for workforce diversity. Students raised concerns about short breaks during three-hour classes, which they asked to be reviewed. They expressed interest in additional curriculum choices, including social-care courses. The Board noted that learners valued the College's supportive culture and staff responsiveness. The students demonstrated improved English proficiency and confidence. The Board commended their contributions and reaffirmed its commitment to maintaining ESOL provision aligned to learner needs. **Action: ESOL team to review break lengths in three-hour ESOL sessions following student feedback** **Delegate: Vice Principal Adult & Vice Dean** **Date: 31st March 2026**
Date of Next Meeting 31st March 2026	
	Signed (Chair) **Dated**
Meeting closed at 13:30pm	