The Manchester College Board

Minutes of the meeting held on 22 April 2026 at 9:30am at Openshaw (OP-105)

Present	Garry Bridges (Chair), John Thornhill (CEO/Governor), Justice Ellis (Co-optee Governor), Catherine Hill (Co-optee Governor) and Rachel Curry (Principal)
Apologies	Philip Johnson (Governor)
In Attendance	Debbie Sanderson (Vice Principal Resources, Planning & Performance), Michael Walsh (Deputy Principal: Adult Curriculum and Student Support), Mark Harris (Vice Principal Adult & Vice Dean), Michelle Fletcher (Vice Principal – TMC Quality), Ed Lack (LTE Group Director Quality and Standards), Christian Jowles (Assistant Principal), Andrew Pickles (Assistant Principal), Orla Wood (Divisional Finance Director – College and Income Team), Stuart Steen (Vice Principal FE), and SJ Gilmore (Deputy Company Secretary). Ella Tsui-Lau (Assistant Principal) for item 5.

PART A

The meeting opened at 09:30 and was quorate with at least 3 Governors present	
The Chair thanked attendees for their flexibility in amending the meeting date. He also noted the need for additional members to the Board which the Deputy Company Secretary confirmed had been approved by the Governance Committee and was in progress.	
1	**Apologies** Apologies were received for Philip Johnson (Governor). To enable quoracy the Group Chair had applied section 3.3 of the constitution and approved a substitute member (John Thornhill) attending as per Section 41 of the Standing Orders advises: *A substitute member may any attend any meeting in place of a member unable to attend in order to ensure the meeting is quorate; such a member may be either a governor or co-optee.*
2	**Declarations of Interest** 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 25th November 2025 were approved as a true and accurate record of the meeting to be signed by the Chair.
4	**Matters Arising** The Board noted the status of and updates to ongoing actions. A member asked for an update on new Functional Skills qualifications, including the proposed 'stepping stone' qualification; the Principal advised that the matter was out for national consultation and that TMC would respond. An update on curriculum changes, including this item, would be provided in June.
Ella Tsui-Lau joined the meeting	
5	**Item 5 - Curriculum: Presentation from Department – Engineering (Automotive/Construction/Engineering and Logistics)** The Assistant Principal delivered a presentation highlighting improvements made and planned developments within Engineering. • **Performance:** Engineering achievement reported at 94.5%, with continued improvement in T Levels. • **Attendance:** Improvement trend compared to last year, supported by an attendance strategy and targeted campaigns (including for ACEL students), aligned to the LTE vision of 'creating better futures'. • **Curriculum intent and alignment:** Curriculum developed with staff consultation and employer input, aligned to Greater Manchester strategic priorities and GMCA-informed provision.

	• **Investment and sector context:** Reference made to GMCA investment (including £182m nationally into Engineering) and the opportunity to respond to demand, an ageing workforce and skills shortages; clean energy identified as strategically important for the UK economy. • **Curriculum changes / pathways:** New pathways to provide clear steps into Engineering, including introductory fabrication and welding, with strategic focus on BTEC and Level 3 T Levels. • **Employer engagement:** Improved over two years via stakeholder advisory boards; increased employer numbers since 2023/24; increased apprenticeship engagement, including examples of 'pan apprenticeships', masterclasses and strengthened links with UCEN Manchester and higher/national apprenticeships. • **Employability:** 'Passport to Employment' skills certificate introduced across ACEL (five short employer co-designed modules) to support learners' employability and provide a differentiator in the job market. • **Staff culture and capacity:** Staff survey improvements (2023 to 2025); enhanced communication (faculty briefs) and consultation mechanisms (suggestion box with responses/actions). Staff turnover and sickness had declined. Investment in specialist CPD and industry upskilling continued. • **Learner voice:** Student survey results had improved (referencing end-of-year QPD surveys and external benchmarks). • **Destinations:** Increased progression into HE and apprenticeships; key employers increasingly taking learners on as apprentices, supported by TMC's reputation. • **Challenges:** Ongoing work to strengthen T Level delivery; recruitment challenges addressed via recruitment drives and 'industry to teach' routes. March curriculum review identified key strengths and focus areas in progress with staff. • **Vision:** Ambition for Engineering to be first choice for employers, staff and students; development as a specialist centre with pathways aligned to GM's strategy. The Chair advised he and members welcomed the reported growth and quality improvements alongside positive staff indicators. A member congratulated the team on the achievements and noted the value of using LinkedIn to showcase stakeholder engagement and strengthen external perception. Members discussed promoting Engineering as relatable and attractive to young people, including early engagement with schools, clearer messaging on job roles/salaries/careers, and the use of social media. A member noted staff retention figures and the importance of communicating that modern Engineering (including clean energy, AI and new technologies) differs from common perceptions. In response to a question about what would most help staff, the Assistant Principal highlighted the importance of equipment and industry-replicating workshops; members discussed the equipment strategy and GMCA funding (including a grant for equipment), and conversion of facilities at Wythenshawe. The Chair requested ongoing updates as equipment investment is implemented and as this unlocks and sustains further growth. A member asked whether employers had identified any gaps; it was reported that employer feedback is sought at the outset to ensure learners are equipped for the workplace, with no specific challenges raised. The Principal commented that the department was 'unrecognisable' compared to two years ago and recognised the impact of the Assistant Principal's leadership and enthusiasm.
Ella Tsui-Lau left the meeting Colleagues left the room for the restricted item	
6	**Principal's Overview and Principalship Structure 2026-27**
6a	**Restricted Session** [REDACTED]
Colleagues rejoined the meeting	
6b	The Board noted strong national achievement outcomes and progress in regional league tables. Members noted the appointment of the College as a Technical Excellence College (digital technology), with the first Department for Education meeting scheduled for May. It was noted that the designation was not yet formally signed, pending that meeting, and that an informal network with other digital technology colleges was in development (noting TMC as the only digital tech college north of Birmingham). **The Board received for information the Principal's Overview.**
7	**Quality Update**

	The Board noted the scorecard reflected a strong position overall. Attendance remained good despite slight dips in 16–18; 16–18 retention continued to strengthen. It was noted the scorecard was under review with business units and would be updated to reflect the new Ofsted framework. It was reported that TMC was reviewing maths provision with the group quality team, with recommendations expected in the summer. Members discussed the importance of contextualising maths and drawing on employer input; it was noted functional skills curriculum uses contextualised approaches and further work (including potential use of AI support and external consultant support) was being considered. GCSE Maths & English attendance was commended. Members discussed areas requiring improvement (including animal care). It was noted support was in place for areas shown as amber and that the paper was intended to provide assurance, with future reporting to include quality enhancement. **Action: Progress with Animal care to be reported back to the Board** **Delegate: Vice Principal Quality and Deputy Principal 16-18** **Timescale: 1 July 2026, under Matters Arising** Members commended improvements and noted operational changes (including scheduling) had been reviewed following a deep dive. Discussion took place on how inclusion would be evidenced under the new framework, including the intention to define and track inclusion 'categories' of students, and to capture more granular data (including analysis by postcode/socio-economic indicators). It was noted this analysis is undertaken but was not included within this report, and that review of data reporting is underway to support more contextual insight. **The Board received for information the Quality Update.**
Ed Lack left the meeting	
8	**Student Destinations Report** The Vice Principal – TMC Quality presented a report on actual student destinations (noting some organisations report intended destinations), using J2 research. It was noted this level of destination insight is still relatively unusual in her experience and would support inspection assurance. A destinations app had been developed to inform curriculum planning; continued work with J2 will explore additional insights available through the data. It was noted that students who left in 2023/24 and entered work will be contacted now (two years after leaving) to assess prolonged destination outcomes such as job changes, progression, salary increases and relevance to study. Approximately 3,000 leavers were surveyed, with c.67% response rate reported. Members noted that some destinations reflect neutral factors (e.g. retirement/childcare) and that some learners move into roles not directly related to their course. A member noted the reliance on survey data and asked how more meaningful capture could be achieved; it was agreed there was variation across the group and that a set of tools and techniques should be developed, including establishing a cross group team to take this forward. Use of WhatsApp/text was noted as a potential way to increase response rates still further. Members noted the report was a useful conversation starter for curriculum planning and that the data had already informed proposed changes and assessment of offer changes (including in HE). **The Board received for assurance the Student Destinations Report.**
9	**TMC Compliments and Complaints Report** The Board noted highlights to July 2025, including a year-on-year decrease in complaints in the 16–18 learner group and a decrease in ACEL complaints. It was noted that around 70% of complaints were upheld

	or partially upheld; recommendations arising are monitored and followed up under quality oversight. It was noted that 'partially upheld' can reflect a small element being upheld. For 2025/26, an increase in complaints was reported, mainly relating to enrolment and progression (related to capacity challenges in the main); it was noted several complainants had disciplinaries in place. Members discussed benchmarking and severity of complaints themselves. The Vice Principal Resources, Planning & Performance confirmed no benchmark data was currently available and agreed to provide additional analysis in the next report, linked to risk/severity and demonstrating changes made/learning as a result. It was noted there were 10 appeals (of 53 cases referenced) and that there appeared to be no correlation between complaints volume and other quality indicators. **The Board received for assurance the TMC Compliments and Complaints Report.**
10	**EDI Update** The Board received the annual EDI update, including progress against actions set within the LTE Group EDI strategy and reporting. No areas of concern were highlighted. Members noted work underway with Inclusive Employers (IE). Feedback to date indicated no surprises and that the organisation has many 'ingredients' in place, with further sophistication required to utilise them consistently. On next steps it was reported that a workshop with business unit representatives would determine what the strategic themes should be for the LTE strategy. An early draft strategy would be presented to the LTE Group Board in July, then consulted on with employees. Discussion noted that reporting had primarily focused on employees; members highlighted the importance of student EDI insights and that IE feedback may require separate streams for students and employees, supported by consistent data collection approaches. It was noted that once the group strategy is approved by the group board, divisional boards will oversee delivery of the plan for their business areas. **The Board received for information the EDI Update.**
11	**Performance Report** The Vice Principal Resources, Planning & Performance reported that most areas were looking positive, with key issues as set out in the report. On Estates/Campus Environment the Chair asked whether outside spaces had been reviewed; it was confirmed that internal and external spaces had been reviewed across each campus; grants to date had come with restrictions that the funds could only be used for teaching space, not ancillary space, so internal communal space was more challenging to develop. The Chair requested an update on outside spaces at the next meeting. It was confirmed this excluded cafeteria space. RC noted the enrichment team is involved in developing ideas with students. **Action: Provide an update on outside spaces** **Delegate: Vice Principal Resources, Planning & Performance** **Timescale: 1 July 2026** On Workforce, Members noted a positive picture and welcomed a reduction in sickness rates. Colleague life cycle data was discussed including length of stay. The Vice Principal Resources, Planning & Performance advised discussions are ongoing with relevant business units, with strengthened induction and lifecycle surveys during induction. On Exit survey themes a member referenced pay and work-life balance as one of main reasons for leaving and requested interpretation of the latter; he was advised workload had been cited and was under review, with no specific additional insight at this stage as to why it is emerging as a theme.

	The Board received for assurance the Performance Report.
12	**Student & Stakeholder Voice Report** The Student & Stakeholder Voice Report set out how the College listens to students and stakeholders, noting it was well established and continuing to evolve. The Chair asked about the views of students with additional needs, including those with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs). It was noted that avenues are being explored to capture and understand these student experiences, including more natural conversation approaches. The recent deep dive in this area had also included a survey of parents of young people with an EHCP. The Principal noted that student voice is key to the EDI strategy going forward and that SEND students' needs should be considered in decision-making; members noted engaging parents and carers can require different approaches (with 70 responses last year and 10 followed up by phone). A member asked how the College 'closes the loop' to demonstrate to learners that feedback is acted upon; it was reported that the Head of Department - Quality leads the Student Voice team, additionally student 'You said, We did' briefings were delivered in tutorials, with the content provided by the Vice Principal. **The Board received for assurance the Student & Stakeholder Voice Report.**
Date of Next Meeting 1st July 2026	
	Signed (Chair) **Dated**
Meeting closed at 13:00	