

Queen Mary's College Local Governing Body

Minutes of a Meeting held on Tuesday 17th March 2026 at 5.30pm

Conference Room, Queen Mary's College, Basingstoke

Present:

Mr David O'Donnell (Chair)
Ms Maya Barton (student)
Mrs Maria Benedit (parent)
Mrs Mandy Buchanan
Mrs Liz Cooper
Mrs Jackie Day
Mr Mark Henderson (Principal)
Mr Shahpor Golshani (staff)
Mr Mark Kingswood – *from 5.45pm*
Ms Irate Odewale (student)
Mrs Agnes Wisniewska (staff) – online via TEAMS

9/11 quorate
(excluding students)

In attendance:

Mrs Jean Thorpe – Trustee – *till 6.45pm*
Ms Anne Sharp – Trustee – *till 7pm*
Ms Kate Need, Deputy Principal QMC
Mr Tom Featherstone, Oxbridge Coordinator – *till 6.15pm*
Dr Toni Baldwin, Academy Secretary

44. **WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

David O'Donnell welcomed Tom Featherstone (Oxbridge Coordinator) as well as Anne Sharp (new NHEA Trustee who would be joining the Local Governing Body) to the meeting. The LGB also welcomed Jean Thorpe, NHEA Trustee and HCC Education Manager for post-16 and secondary schools in Hampshire. The Local Governing Body noted that Agnes Wisniewska was joining online as she was currently carrying out an EPQ review at Woking College.

Apologies for absence were received from Kirsten Johnston and Neil Maxfield and the LGB noted that Mark Kingswood would be joining a little later.

45. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

46. **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the QMC-LGB meeting held on 20th January 2026 (paper LGB 30/25) were approved by the LGB as a correct record.

47.1 **MATTERS ARISING AND OUTSTANDING ACTIONS**

Minute 36.9: Policies.

Kate Need reported that the Complaints Policy would be reviewed later in the meeting and that SLT were considering the option of a Teaching and Learning Policy in due course. This policy was not compulsory but could be useful in improving consistency across the college.

48.1 **UPDATE FROM THE PRINCIPAL**

Mark Henderson gave a short verbal update:

- The Strategy Day had been a useful event with Trustees and Governors discussing the Trust's mission and vision as well as marketing and communication and Ofsted.
- The College was holding several recruitment events for specific groups during March, for example, the Creative Arts Department had an open evening this evening and

there had been a joint STEM/ Triple A+ event last week. One of the Trustees, David Ayre) had attended the Triple A+ event last week with his son. His son had been inspired by the event and David had provided some constructive feedback on the event from a parent's point of view.

- The summer open evening would take place on April 16th 2026 – although mainly aimed at year 10 pupils this event also gave year 11 students another chance to see the College before they started in September.
- The first of the new V Levels had been announced; Mark Henderson was positive about the new qualifications which would gradually replace other applied vocational courses (BTECs CTECs etc.). The new approach was moving away from large (triple and double) qualifications to provide qualifications that would work alongside A Levels and fit with the mix of qualifications currently offered by QMC.

- 48.2 Mark Henderson reported that, Laura Cook, Assistant Principal at Woking College, had recently been appointed as QMC's Deputy Principal replacing Kate Need. The LGB noted that there had been a good field of candidates (22) of which 6 were asked in for the first day of interviews and activities reducing to two for the final interview on the second day. Both David O'Donnell and Jean Thorpe had been part of the final interview and reported on the recruitment process. The LGB noted that Laura would be joining the College in September 2026 and would attend LGB meetings.

Mark Kingswood joined the meeting

49.1 **SUPPORTING OXBRIDGE APPLICANTS**

Tom Featherstone presented on QMC Oxbridge support which was part of the Triple A+ Programme. Tom reported that he, and several other QMC staff were Oxbridge graduates and were very keen to encourage capable students to apply to Oxford or Cambridge and benefit from their exceptional education. The College was partnered with St Hilda's College Oxford and QMC staff were regularly trained by both Oxford and Cambridge to support applicants. QMC students who applied for Oxbridge had a 95% offer rate from their other university choices (mainly Russell Group or Sutton 30 universities) often at lower grade requirements than published. Over the last few years, the rate of offers for QMC students had been high (e.g. in 2026: 23% offers compared to a global offer rate of 19%).

- 49.2 The LGB heard about the support given to Oxbridge applicants:

- Students with a 7.0+ GCSE average (or a group of related subjects at 8/9 – eg STEM or languages) were invited to the programme at the start of their first year at QMC. Other students who were on course for AAA+ at A Level were identified by their tutors and recommended to the programme.
- Students received weekly general Oxbridge support from September of year 1. Support included specific aspects of the application process (courses, colleges, admissions tests, interview prep) along with more general support e.g. finding super-curricular activities and writing personal statements.
- Since September 2025 2nd year students had received weekly Oxbridge style subject tutorial conversations, and the tutorials were rolled out to 1st year students in January 2026. The aim of subject tutorials was to improve students understanding of their subjects as well as improving oracy by getting students to talk and problem solve on their feet. QMC planned to provide subject tutorials for all potential Oxbridge applicants from September 2026.
- Tom Featherstone reported that since he had taken on the role of Oxbridge coordinator in 2021, the number of applications had gone up and offers had increased. For 2025/26, 44 1st year students were on the programme and he anticipated that around 2/3rds of them would apply.

- 49.3 The LGB noted the number of ex-QMC students currently at Oxford or Cambridge and the range of subjects that they were studying as well as the subjects students had applied for in 2026. The LGB asked a number of questions:

A lot of this year's applications were for Humanities subjects, any reason why there were fewer STEM applicants? With small numbers of applications, subject trends appeared stronger, however, there was an increase in medics and vets' applications to all Universities this year and therefore a decrease in STEM applications to Oxbridge. Tom Featherstone highlighted that approximately half of ex-QMC students currently at Oxford or Cambridge were studying STEM subjects and explained that as medicine was such a competitive subject, potential medics were not encouraged to apply for the even more competitive Oxford and Cambridge medical school places.

Supporting the programme required commitment from staff, how were they selected to participate? Tom Featherstone reported that, he had had a good response to his requests for help with the programme and that this year, as part of the expansion of the programme, tutorial support was included in teachers' directed time (contracted hours) rather than through 'goodwill'. Kate Need explained that some staff acted as Oxbridge tutors instead of, for example, running an enrichment each week.

Oxbridge was not for everyone – how was this conveyed to parents? Mark Henderson reported that the positive Oxbridge statistics were included in the QMC marketing approach with the aim of attracting high-grade students but that this was only a part of the marketing approach. The aim was to convince all potential students and their parents that there was no need to go out of Basingstoke for post-16 education. Tom Featherstone added that different students had different needs and that the Oxbridge programme supported those interested in studying at Oxford and Cambridge as well as possible but there was other support at QMC for students with different needs and interests.

- 49.4 Tom Featherstone ended his presentation with a look at the strengths and weaknesses of the Oxbridge programme. The LGB noted that:

- All students with an 8.0+ GCSE average, who were likely to benefit from applying to Oxford or Cambridge, were now part of the programme.
- Historically most students gaining Oxbridge offers had come to QMC from schools outside Basingstoke.
- Any further expansion of the Oxbridge programme was reliant on increasing the number of high-grade students studying at QMC.

The LGB thanked Tom for an interesting update on the Oxbridge programme.

Tom Featherstone left the meeting

50.1 OFSTED PREPARATION

The LGB noted a presentation on the new Ofsted framework taken from the presentation given at the recent Strategy Day (paper LGB 31/25). Jean Thorpe talked through the presentation highlighting aspects of the new framework:

- Inclusion was at the core of the framework – with a focus on understanding the context in which the institution sits as well as reducing barriers to learning and wellbeing.
- This is a new framework and is not mappable to the previous. Institutions will be given a report card with each area on a five point scale.
- QMC will be judged on eight areas – safeguarding, inclusion, curriculum and teaching, achievement, attendance and behaviour, personal development and well-being, post-16 and leadership and governance.
- The standards for each area are detailed in toolkits and will be judged using a secure fit (not best fit) method.
- Institutions will have 5 days notice of inspections, report cards will be turned around quickly and if necessary re-inspections will happen in around 6 months.

- 50.2 Turning to what would be expected of QMC Governors, Jean Thorpe reported that some of the Local Governors would be expected to meet with inspectors and, although they would not be expected to operational detail they would be expected to show strategic grip. Jean suggested that the LGB concentrate on the following:
- Knowing and understanding the mission, vision and values of the College
 - Keeping up to date on information, reports and data on safeguarding, Inclusion, Curriculum and achievement and leadership and governance.
 - Being able to articulate the vision and priorities, strengths, risks and areas for improvement and the impact that the governing body was having.
- In summary, Governors should carry on with their usual activities but refresh their understanding of areas (in line with the toolkits); reflect on improvements and impacts; and identify areas to focus on.
- 50.3 The LGB discussed the new Ofsted framework, noting that QMC was due an inspection in February 2027. David O'Donnell reminded those present that the LGB now had two Governors covering each of the following areas – safeguarding, SEND, Careers and EDI/Inclusion. The LGB noted a recent Ofsted scorecard from a local college which had been one of the first inspected. Mark Henderson and Kate Need reported that the College had considered the inspection fair and in line with their understanding of themselves. The LGB agreed to discuss the different areas reviewed by Ofsted at future meetings and to use the new standards as a benchmark. The LGB thanked Jean Thorpe for a very useful presentation and discussion.

Jean Thorpe left the meeting.

51.1 **REPORT FROM STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES**

Irate Odewale and Maya Barton reported on Students' Union activity:

- The main SU event coming up was the culture day – a celebration of the different cultures represented at QMC through, dance, music, cultural dress and stalls. This event had been very successful in 2024 but less well attended in 2025. The Local Governors made a number of suggestions to help engage students including advertising a range of roles to suit different people, getting staff and/or external speakers involved and identifying key students from each culture to act as go-betweens for groups of students. Agnes Wisniewska and Mandy Buchanan offered to support the SU with this event.
- The students asked if a path could be built across the Allen lawn as an access route in wet weather. Mark Henderson explained that the area in front of the Allen building was roped off for large parts of each winter as it got very muddy and buildings ended up needing additional cleaning. The LGB noted that a path for this area was on the estates 'wish list' but no money had been allocated. Mark Henderson reported that the current premises improvements list would be reviewed as a new premises manager had recently been appointed.

- 51.2 Maria Benedit reminded the students that the company she worked for gave grants of £500 to support local projects as part of their corporate social responsibility work. Students would need to submit a project proposal and if successful would need to provide photos and a summary of the project.

Action: consider SU project MHN

Anne Sharp left the meeting

52.1 **GOVERNOR ENGAGEMENT 2025/26 – standing item**

The LGB noted feedback from a Careers visit on 9th February 2026, a Governors' Visit morning on 11th February 2026 and an EDI visit on 9th March (papers LGB 32a/25, LGB

32b/25 and LGB 33/25). The LGB noted that this term's Governors' Visit included a demonstration of the new student portal, visits to enrichments and a review of the English, MFL and Humanities curriculum area. Four governors had attended the visit and those present highlighted:

- Jason Yeomans had given a useful presentation on his curriculum area (please could the PowerPoint be added to GovernorHub) **Action**
- The lesson that some of the governors had sat in had been exceptional and their thanks had been passed back to the member of staff.
- The Board Games Club would welcome any spare board games suitable for 16-19 year olds to add to their selection.

TBN

52.2 Liz Cooper reported on her visit as an EDI representative. The visit had started with a meeting with Sally-Anne Spooner to discuss EDI management and Liz had then attended the termly EDI Committee meeting. Liz Cooper reported on the very interesting discussion that she had with Helen Henderson (Assistant Principal) and Debbie Rawlings (T3 Coordinator) about the T3 (Transition to Level 3) programme. The LGB noted that the year-long T3 programme with a mix of level 2 and level 3 courses was the main bridging route for students who had, for any reason, not done well with their GCSEs to then progress to a full Level 3 programme. The LGB noted that T3 was a very inclusive course with around 1/3 of the cohort having EHCPs and was an important part of the College's inclusion activity. Kate Need reported that the T3 programme had developed significantly since the LGB had last heard about it (it was originally launched as Aspire).

52.3 The LGB discussed inclusion in general following on from the discussion of inclusion in the new Ofsted framework. Those present made a number of suggestions including:

- the College should consider writing and adopting an Inclusion Strategy
- the LGB should have a standing item on some area of inclusion at each of their meetings.
- A report or presentation on T3 to be added to an upcoming LGB agenda.

The LGB asked SLT to consider how to evidence inclusion at QMC.

Action: T3 presentation/report
Action: inclusion standing item

KND

KND

53.1 **POLICIES**

The LGB noted a new Behaviour Policy (paper LGB 34/25). Kate Need explained that it was a DfE requirement to have a Behaviour Policy and that this policy had been written bringing together from a number of other policies and processes including, smoking, bullying and harassment, substance misuse and attendance. As part of the changes, Student Conduct policies had been separated from Staff conduct policies, for example with IT. Mandy Buchanan reported that she had suggested some clarifications within the policy and the LGB noted definitions of harassment, child on child abuse and references to Keeping Children Safe in Education and the Equality Act 2010 that had been added to the version of the policy initially circulated. One of the Trustees highlighted the infographic of College Expectations that was circulated to all students and suggested changes to this to put the emphasis on the positive behaviours expected of students. The LGB approved the Policy with these changes and recommended it to the Board of Trustees.

Action: amended Behaviour Policy to Board of Trustees **TBN**

53.2 The LGB discussed behaviour at the College generally noting that students were asked to sign a learning agreement at the start of their time at QMC and were generally well behaved. Mark Henderson reported that he tried to set a culture of respect for students to follow without being too prescriptive, however, if students' behaviour was unacceptable they were first given warnings and suspended and then, if necessary, asked to leave the College.

- 53.3 The LGB noted an updated version of the Complaints Policy (paper LGB 35/25). Kate Need highlighted the minor changes and the LGB approved the Policy with a couple of small additions including contact details for Sally-Anne Spooner.

Action: amended Complaints Policy to Board of Trustees TBN

54.1 **GOVERNORS MONITORING INFORMATION – *standing item***

The LGB noted the Governors Management Report with executive summary for the second half of the Autumn Term (paper LGB 27/25). Kate Need briefly summarised the report highlighting that attendance and retention remained good. The LGB noted predicted grades for 2026 which were generally in line with the previous year's results. Local Governors asked questions about attendance and Kate Need reported that attendance usually drifted slightly towards the end of the year and was monitored until May half term when the exams started. The LGB noted that retention for first years remained high and that this would impact positively on achievement rates. There were no other matters of concern.

- 54.2 Kate Need updated the LGB on actions towards the Quality Improvement Plan.
- The February INSET day had focused on the theme of inclusion, coinciding with the governments' report on SEND reform. Staff had completed an Inclusion audit the results of which would come to the LGB in due course.
 - Now that the UCAS applications were in, the Careers team were concentrating on students looking for apprenticeships or work.
 - Careers support for students with learning difficulties had been improved in response to the SAR and Ofsted and as reported at the last LGB meeting, students with EHCPs had individual careers interviews. Also, for this year the first part of the Careers fair was invitation only for those students with EHCPs/learning difficulties.

- 54.3 Kate Need reported that the SLT were part way through mid-year review meetings with the Directors of Learning. The remaining meeting were scheduled for after the Applied Vocational results were out so that they could be reviewed. MIS had produced new monitoring reports of potential achievement and value added based on predicted grades and this data was being discussed at the MYR meetings. The LGB noted that exams started on 11th May and so teachers were making final interventions with students.

55.1 **COMMUNICATION BETWEEN QMC-LGB AND NHEA BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

The LGB noted a summary of Trust meetings and activities since their last meeting (paper LGB 37/25) along with the most recent risk register (paper LGB 38/25). There were no issues of concern raised. The LGB noted the only change to the risk register was the reduction in score for the risk that "College support services unable to adequately support students who don't get timely access to external services (impacting retention)" Kate Need reported that since this was raised as a risk, the College had improved its support services.

56.1 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Mark Henderson announced the good news that the College had been awarded £350k from Basingstoke and Deane Council towards the refurbishment of their pitches – an issue that had been of concern to the LGB following a Governor Visit to the Sport, PE and Health and Social Care curriculum area two years ago.

57. **DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS AND EVENTS**

Local Governing Body meetings
Tuesday 28th April 2026 at 5.30pm
Tuesday 9th June 2026 5.30pm

Governors' Visit Mornings
Tuesday 12th May 2026 am

Approved

The Chair thanked those present and the meeting ended at 7.35pm

For approval at the meeting on 28th April 2026

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS	Timescale	Responsibility
Minute 52.3: Action: T3 presentation/report Action: inclusion standing item	To be confirmed ongoing	KND
Minute 53.1: amended Behaviour Policy to Board of Trustees	March 2026	TBN
Minute 53.3: amended Complaints Policy to Board of Trustees	March 2026	TBN

Toni Baldwin
Academy Secretary, Queen Mary's College