

Queen Mary's College Local Governing Body

Minutes of a Meeting held on Tuesday 25th November 2025 at 5.30pm

Conference Room, Queen Mary's College, Basingstoke

Present:

Mr David O'Donnell (Chair)
Ms Maya Barton (student) – to 6.40pm
Mrs Mandy Buchanan
Mr Mark Henderson (Principal)
Ms Kirsten Johnston
Mr Mark Kingswood
Mr Neil Maxfield – via TEAMS – to 7.00pm

6/11 quorate
(excluding students)

In attendance:

Mr Gordon Holdcroft, Chair NHEA Trust
Ms Kate Need, Deputy Principal QMC
Mrs Helen Henderson, Assistant Principal QMC
Dr Toni Baldwin, Academy Secretary

17. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

David O'Donnell welcomed Gordon Holdcroft Chair of the Trust and Helen Henderson Assistant Principal QMC to the meeting.

Apologies for absence were received from Maria Benedit, Liz Cooper, Jackie Day, Irate Odewale, Sarah Pritchard and Agnes Wisniewska.

18. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

19.1 TRUST STRATEGIC FOCUS FOR 2025/26

The LGB noted seven points of strategic focus for 2025/26 (paper LGB 12/25) which had previously been reviewed and agreed by the Board of Trustees. Gordon Holdcroft explained the Trust's priorities:

1. Put the best team and structure in place – LGB has a range of skills and knowledge and includes staff, parents, students, Governors challenge well. The Trust Board has business skills and knowledge and is looking for a couple more Trustees from an audit/ assurance and an estates/Health and Safety background.
2. Ensure the Trust is financially sustainable – taking the medium-term view and scenario planning.
3. **Aim to improve exam results each year**
4. Market the College to attract the maximum number of students
5. **Create a safe, caring and supportive structure**
6. **Put measures in place to monitor progress** – including preparing for an Ofsted inspection in Autumn 2026.
7. Support the Senior Leadership Team using mentoring and coaching.

- 19.2 David O'Donnell reminded those present that these points would be covered by the Board of Trustees and committees as well as the LGB and that the responsibilities for the LGB were 3) exam results, 5) safe and supportive structure, and 6) monitoring and preparation for Ofsted.

20. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the QMC-LGB meeting held on 30th September 2025 (paper LGB 13/25) were approved by the LGB as a correct record.

21.1 **MATTERS ARISING AND OUTSTANDING ACTIONS**

Minute 3.1: Review of LGB roles

David O'Donnell reminded those present that the LGB had agreed to review the LGB roles and reported that he had discussed options with community and parent Local Governors. The LGB noted a proposal to have two Local Governors to cover each of the statutory roles in order to strengthen governance in these areas and prepare for a potential Ofsted inspection. The LGB approved the following roles:

Vice Chair: Sarah Pritchard

Safeguarding: Mark Kingswood and Mandy Buchanan

SEND: Jackie Day and Maria Benedit

Careers: Kirsten Johnston and Neil Maxfield

EDI: Liz Cooper

Mark Henderson reported that staff in these areas had been reassured that this change was about increasing LGB understanding and succession planning not additional monitoring of their areas.

21.2 Minute 9.2: Potential SU funding bid – to be covered in report from student representatives

Minute 10.2: Governors to attend SAR meetings – to be covered under item 8

Minute 16.1: mid-year review of courses being monitored – to take place March 2026

22.1 **UPDATE FROM THE PRINCIPAL**

Mark Henderson started his update by reporting that two students had participated in the Basingstoke Remembrance Sunday parade and laid a wreath on behalf of QMC. The LGB noted that more information was being released about the Government's changes regarding education.

- The Curriculum and Assessment Review was aimed at primary and secondary education but recommended reducing testing and focusing on life skills and enrichment both of which QMC already did.
- The Post-16 White paper introduced the V Level qualifications which were expected to be a new version of BTEC/CTEC and sit between A Levels and T Levels. Mark Henderson highlighted that QMC would be well placed to offer V Levels and that QMC staff were pleased that the vocational route was being given equal status to both the advanced (academic) and technical routes.

22.2 Mark Henderson briefly reported on the changes to the Ofsted framework, highlighting the emphasis on inclusion i.e.:

- A college's ability to create a culture that supports and welcomes all pupils, particularly those who are disadvantaged or have additional needs.
- Removing barriers: actively working to remove barriers to learning and to full participation in all aspects of college life. This includes access to the curriculum, support arrangements and pupil management systems.

The LGB briefly discussed Ofsted, noting that QMC was due an inspection in Autumn 2026 and that this inspection would be using the new framework/score card which had five grades.

22.3 Mark Henderson ended his report by updating those present regarding the sad death of a student. The student had died on 10th November 2025 and several other students had witnessed the death. All those involved were being supported by the College along with the staff and students who taught or were taught with the young person who had died. The LGB asked to put on record their condolences to the family of the student and the students and staff at QMC.

23.1 **REPORT FROM STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES**

Maya Barton reported on Students' Union activity:

- The College had been participating in EDI events such as Black History Month and Disability History Month with information and presentations in Tutor sessions.
- The SU were collecting small presents for young people in mental health wards over the Christmas period through Sasha's Project – all donations were welcome.
- The SU had discussed the use of possible funding but had not decided on a project. One area that could be improved was the downstairs part of the library which had large open tables and was not conducive to private study - this area could be made more of a learning zone for students. Mark Henderson reported that this area was on the list of areas for improvement, however, more funding was required.

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

The LGB noted feedback from the Governor Visit morning which took place on 16th October 2025 (papers LGB 14/25 and 15/25). Two Governors and a Trustee had visited 2nd year tutorial sessions and the Performing Arts Curriculum Area. Kirsten Johnston and Mandy Buchanan reported back to the LGB. The first-year tutorial had focused on driving safely with slides, a discussion and a quiz. Staff tailored their presentations to their subject (biology, law) and students particularly engaged with the 'morning after' alcohol calculator.

24.2 The LGB heard that the visit to Performing Arts had been inspirational, the group had seen a snapshot of the department and had observed students taking a wide range of classes and courses – rehearsing for performances, discussing choreographers, sampling from a keyboard for music technology etc. Both Governors had seen 'on the spot' feedback from staff and had had positive responses from students about getting regular feedback from staff. One of the Governors highlighted the Performance Arts course which was the only one in the area and attracted passionate students from a wide area. Other points noted were posters around the department setting out clear stages of learning and development, and the financial support for students taking instrument and singing lessons.

24.3 One of the Governors asked about the high acoustic levels in some of the practice rooms. Kate Need reported to the LGB that each student is spoken to at the beginning of their course, they are issued paperwork explaining the associated risks of loud noise along with ear bud defenders and sign a risk assessment after these discussions. Students are regularly reminded to keep the levels of sound low, the team regularly undertake a decibel level check and additional ear bud defenders are available in the staff work room. Drums also had dampeners on them and the College had electric drum kits. The LGB suggested posters in the room and noted that, as a result of this query, individual decibel monitors (red/amber/green) had been put up in each of the applicable rooms. However, from experience young people in general had a preference for putting the volume up while the staff put it back down.

24.4 The LGB noted that the students questioned as part of the visit were able to identify where they would go for help for themselves or friends if required (Help Desk, Tutor etc.). One of the Local Governors offered the support of St John's Ambulance community outreach to support the Tutorial programme.

Action: SLT to consider adding first aid to Tutorial Programme MHN

24.5 The LGB noted verbal feedback from Governor Observation of SAR meetings which had taken place between 4th and 13th of November). Three SARs had been observed: Maria Benedict in Social Sciences, Mark Kingswood in English, Humanities, Modern Foreign Languages and EPQ, and David O'Donnell in Mathematics. Mark Kingswood reported

that it had been an interesting process to observe. The data being reviewed in the meeting was comprehensive and clear and value-added information covered both prior attainment and subgroups (bursary students etc.) to ensure inclusion. Staff development was depersonalised and professional and recommendations and actions were appropriate, for example, with EPQs where internally marked scripts had been moderated down significantly, staff would be going on marking workshops. Mark Kingswood was very complementary of the Director of Learning who in his words had a 'very evaluative and evidence-based approach'.

24.6 David O'Donnell reported on the Mathematics SAR meeting. The LGB noted that this was a high performing department with excellent results and so the Director of Learning was now concentrating on improving student's soft skills such as team working. As with the SAR meeting that Mark Kingswood observed, it was obvious that the Director of Learning understood their staff and student cohort. Helen Henderson added that with Mathematics, staff were looking at how to provide stretch for the top mathematicians by improving skills such as oracy and working in groups. Kate Need reminded the LGB that each department was different and had a different set of challenges, the maths department had improved over the years to get to this level, and other departments were working on improving students' examination results in different subject areas.

24.7 The LGB noted that student mock exams would provide the data for mid-year reviews and that Local Governors would be able to observe mid-year review meetings.

25.1 **GOVERNORS MONITORING INFORMATION – *standing item***

The LGB noted the Headline Report for 2025 (snapshot of the student body) along with the Governors Management Report with executive summary for the first half of the Autumn Term (papers LGB 16/25 and LGB 17/25). Kate Need briefly summarised the headline report and highlighted the positive attendance and retention figures from the monitoring report. The LGB noted the two-year programmes with poor retention (note retention is measured over the two years of study).

25.2 The Local Governors asked members of the SLT about the monitoring data:
Is there an impact on the College with fewer students? Kate Need explained that student numbers increased significantly during the Covid-19 pandemic as students received better GCSE results and has then gradually dropped. Helen Henderson reiterated the link between GCSE results in local partner schools and the number of QMC students recruited. Mark Henderson reported that financial impact of student recruitment was being discussed by the Trust Board however, the Trust remained in surplus with good levels of reserves. Kate Need highlighted that student retention had improved significantly over the last two years, and this had a significant positive impact on the Trust's finances. Local Governors noted that the current first year cohort had unusually low maths GCSE grades and so a larger number than usual were retaking their maths GCSEs alongside their Level 3 qualifications.
Why are students coming to QMC from schools with sixth-forms (particularly those in Berkshire)? The LGB noted that this was probably due to a mix of targeted marketing in the area as well as QMC offering a far wider range of qualifications than most schools with sixth-forms.

The LGB thanked Kate Need for useful, clear monitoring data.

26.1 **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 18/25). There were no issues of concern raised. The LGB noted that this year's strategy day would take place early February 2026.

- 26.2 The LGB noted changes proposed to the current Trust Risk Register (paper LGB 19/25). The LGB noted that there were now four high level risks on the register, two of which related to cybersecurity, one to decreasing student numbers and one of changing Government policies (unknown impact of the new V Levels). There were no proposed additions to the Risk Register.

27.1 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Mark Henderson reminded those present about the upcoming Performing Arts shows including Macbeth, Songs from the Shows and the Christmas Concert.

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

Local Governing Body meetings

Tuesday 20th Jan 2026 at 5.30pm

Tuesday 17th March 2026 at 5.30pm

Tuesday 28th April 2026 at 5.30pm

Tuesday 9th June 2026 5.30pm

Governors' Visit Mornings

Wednesday 11th Feb 2026 am

Tuesday 12th May 2026 am

Trust Strategy Day

Thursday 5th February 2026 (timing tbc)

Maya Barton left the meeting

29.1 **QMC 2024/25 SELF ASSESSMENT REPORT AND 2025/26 QUALITY IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

The LGB noted the draft 2024/25 SAR and 2025/26 QIP (paper LGB 20/25). Kate Need started her presentation with a more detailed review of the new Ofsted framework:

- Met or not met for safeguarding.
- Six evaluation areas: achievement, curriculum and teaching, inclusion, participation, development and wellbeing, contribution to meeting skills needs and, leadership and governance.
- Five levels: exceptional, strong standard, expected standard, needs attention and urgent improvement. The top grade was expected to be a very high bar with very few institutions getting this.
- Institutions would be graded by a 'secure fit' model rather than the previous 'best fit'
- There would be a golden thread of inclusion (vulnerability) throughout the judgements with Ofsted taking the view that if students who face barriers to learning 'thrive, belong and achieve' everyone does. (barriers being: SEND, high needs, care leavers, financial disadvantage and low prior attainment in English and maths)

- 29.2 Kate Need reported on the experience of pilot inspections which reviewed the new grades in more detail:

- Exceptional – world class and transformational
- Strong Standard – effectively what was 'Outstanding' in the previous framework
- Expected – roughly the top half of 'Good' in the previous framework
- Needs Attention – probably the norm for most institutions as 'most schools have something that needs work'
- Urgent Improvement – return inspection within 12-18 months to check that things are improving.

The LGB noted that the SAR had been graded against the new Ofsted grades with the majority of evaluation areas graded as 'expected standard' with one area (Contribution to meeting skills need) as 'needs attention' and one area (Participation, development and well-being) fulfilling some of the 'strong standard' criteria.

- 29.3 Kate Need highlighted the strengths and weaknesses of the College as set out in the SAR answering questions from the Local Governors. The LGB were pleased to hear that the A Level pass rate had improved and was higher than other local colleges and that the value added had increased again (third year running) to -0.01. Kate Need highlighted the excellent Maths and English GCSE results most of which were resits with a few students from overseas taking them for the first time. The personal development programme continued to improve, and high numbers of students engaged with social action projects and work experience.

Neil Maxfield left the meeting

- 29.4 Turning to the weaknesses of the College, Kate Need referred to the value-added data from the Sixth Sense report included as an appendix to the SAR. This data showed the inconsistencies sitting under the summary value added figure. The LGB noted the qualifications with high added value and those with poor added value. This data was also broken down by student profile identifying groups of students who were not achieving as their peers. Kate Need talked through each of the qualifications of concern and then Mark Henderson, Kate Need and Helen Henderson responded to points raised by the Local Governors.
- The disparity between students in the lower income quartile and those on Free College Meals needed more investigation but could relate to the group of students just above the FCM cut off who the College aimed to support with bursary funding.
 - The College was working on increasing consistency in teaching, learning and assessment across all subjects
 - HR reviewed any underperforming staff and where necessary put in place performance management.
 - The College was looking at embedding Careers Champions in each department to support meeting the skills agenda. In addition, Mark Henderson would be working more closely with the Chamber of Commerce in Basingstoke which could also improve links between the College and businesses.
- 29.5 The LGB reviewed those subjects that had been monitored during 2024/25 and were pleased to hear that the majority had shown improvement. The few that had not improved were discussed in more detail along with those additional areas that would be monitored during 2025/26. Kate Need and Helen Henderson reported on the teaching, learning and assessment approaches that formed the basis of INSET day staff development during 2025/26. These were set out in the SAR and included a continuation of the Clarity, Challenge, Assessment approach as well as putting in place inclusive learning strategies - entry routines, in class routines and at home routines for students and staff to use to build habits. Directors of Learning and members of SLT were visiting different subjects across the College to also improve consistency.
- 29.6 The LGB noted that the College would have two EQRs (External Quality Reviews) this year 1) Assessment and Feedback and 2) Personal Development this year and reports would be brought to the LGB for review. The LGB discussed the SAR further bearing in mind the question *'does this data show that the 2024/25 quality improvement actions had an impact on student achievement?'* Both the members of SLT present and the LGB agreed that improvements had been made over the year and were continuing. Alongside the improvements in specific subjects, attendance and retention continued to improve as did the personal development programme and careers (as measured against the revised Gatsby benchmarks).
- 29.7 Returning to the discussion regarding the new Ofsted framework the LGB noted that the College had responded to the recommendations made in the 2022 Ofsted report and Gordon Holdcroft highlighted that he had seen a significant improvement in the data and

approved

evidence coming to the LGB from the Senior Leadership Team since he was interviewed for the last Ofsted inspection.

The LGB thanked Kate Need, Mark Henderson and Helen Henderson for a useful presentation and discussion and approved the SAR for forwarding to the Board of Trustees and uploading to the Ofsted portal.

The Chair thanked those present and the meeting ended at 7.30pm

For approval at the meeting on 20th January 2026

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS	Timescale	Responsibility
Minute 24.4: SLT to consider adding first aid to Tutorial Programme	Following meeting	KND

Toni Baldwin
Academy Secretary, Queen Mary's College