

# Waltham Forest College



## THE CORPORATION OF WALTHAM FOREST COLLEGE

### CURRICULUM AND QUALITY COMMITTEE

#### MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 25 NOVEMBER 2025

#### MEMBERSHIP

##### Governors:

Alison Morris (Chair), Susannah Hume (Vice Chair & SEND lead), Kathryn Davies, Bryan Johnston, Janet Gardner (Principal)

##### In Attendance:

Richard Harris – Governor observing

Rachael Booth – Interim Deputy Principal Curriculum & Quality (DPCQ)

Amir Ahmed – Vice Principal (VP)

Michael Burgoyne – Assistant Principal HE (APHE)

##### Clerk to the Corporation

Naomi Shoffman - Director of Governance (DoGov)

#### 146. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies for absence were received from Ms Hume, due to personal commitments and Mr Johnston due to a clash with a work commitment.

#### 147. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

There were no issues included on the agenda for the meeting in which they had a personal interest relative to the College.

#### 148. MINUTES OF THE CURRICULUM & QUALITY COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 17 JUNE 2025

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 June 2025 were agreed as a correct record. It was confirmed that all follow up actions were completed.

#### 149. GOVERNORS HE OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

The Governors HE Oversight Committee meeting was held earlier in the day. The APHE provided an update on the ongoing application for OfS registration, which is critical for the College to offer Higher Education (HE) qualification, the forthcoming QSA visit, the HE SED and QIP . The registration process involves significant bureaucracy, including compliance with the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), which may incur substantial direct and indirect costs. Structural adjustments will be necessary if OfS registration is successful to further expand.

Ms Davies reported that the HE Oversight Committee had discussed the collaboration with the University of Portsmouth and the flexibility offered by the Office for Students (OFS). The Chair queried whether the preferred route for delivering higher education remains the same, to which it was confirmed that the partnership with Portsmouth is still in place and is an important local partnership as they have a Walthamstow campus. The OFS route will offer additional flexibility, especially with the upcoming Lifelong Learning Entitlement (LLE) in 2027. The Principal endorsed the comments

made by the Chair, acknowledging the bureaucratic challenges but emphasising the need for flexibility and ownership, particularly in light of the LLE.

The Curriculum and Quality Committee commended the College's thorough preparation and strategic planning in navigating the complex HE regulatory environment.

**The Committee agreed to:**

- **Continue monitoring OfS engagement and policy developments.**
- **Ensure proactive updates to mitigate any recruitment or operational risks.**

**150. DRAFT COLLEGE SELF-ASSESSMENT REPORT (SAR) 2024/25 AND QIP 2025/26**

The APHE presented the Draft College Self-Assessment Report (SAR) 2024/25 and Quality Improvement Plan(QIP) 2025/26. The college continues to self-assess as outstanding overall, currently working under the old inspection framework until 10 November. The validation process confirmed the college's outstanding status, with new sections added to the SAR to reflect changes in the inspection toolkit, including functional skills results and case studies. Ms Davies shared her positive experience serving on the validation panel along with another external attendee. She commended the college's prudent and reflective approach to self-assessment and welcomed the inclusion of new sections aligned with updates to the inspection toolkit. The APHE added that the updated SAR now includes revised sections based on validation panel feedback and highlighted the ongoing review of the teacher learning assessment framework.

For the benefit of new members the APHE outlined the process for producing the SAR and the QIP. This process aligns with Ofsted's framework and informs strategic priorities.

The committee discussed the importance of accurate self-assessment and highlighted the need for ongoing structural support mechanisms, particularly in anticipation of possible OFS success. The Principal emphasised the importance of the QIP and the need for continuous improvement in areas identified for development.

A member raised a question about developing a culture of research-led learning within the QIP. The APHE responded by referencing the draft action learning sets and acknowledging the need to ensure staff have adequate time allocated for research activity. He also reiterated the continued review of the teacher learning assessment framework. Ms Davies offered to share resources on metacognition, which was welcomed.

The Chair concluded the discussion by emphasising the importance of focusing on areas requiring improvement while recognising the college's overall outstanding performance. She thanked all contributors for their work and ongoing commitment.

**The Committee Endorsed the SAR grades and QIP for submission to the Corporation, highlighting the importance of continued progress monitoring.**

**151. CURRICULUM AND QUALITY UPDATE**

The DPCQ presented a comprehensive summary of the College's performance for the first term of the academic year. The following areas were highlighted:

- Positive progress has been made across Recruitment, Attendance and Punctuality.
- The Socio-Economic Impact Report includes the strong use of infographics to communicate key messages clearly and has reinforced the importance of supporting English and Maths GCSE outcomes.
- The College is returning to AQA awarding body for English GCSE; there was positive feedback from November resits.
- A targeted approach was used for the November resits and further actions were discussed for improving English and maths.

- EEF projects commencing in January, will focus on supporting high-quality tutoring and strengthening equality and access for learners.
- The changes to the inspection framework with the shift from “best fit” to “secure fit”, raising the threshold for meeting standards.
- Continued strong Student recruitment for 16–18 enrolments
- The staffing & recruitment challenges and actions to mitigate
- The October CPD conference was well-received, key strengths highlighted were research-led learning sessions, Creativity cafes and improved collaboration across teaching staff.

The Committee discussed and noted:

- A member praised the impact report and infographics and asked for confirmation on: any changes to resit policy/procedures and Progress and barriers in English and Maths recruitment
- Resits are having a positive impact when applied selectively and with clear criteria.
- The student recruitment risks including potential implications for funding allocation, space constraints and operational capacity. The Principal advised of the mitigation work being done to address this issue.
- The ongoing difficulty recruiting English and Maths teachers (high national demand) and also in Business and Electrical Engineering. The Principal advised the mitigations and approaches underway to address this issue and emphasised the importance of a promoting employee value proposition alongside pay to attract and retain staff.

**The Committee noted the progress on the key aspects of curriculum and quality.**

## **152 SAFEGUARDING AND PREVENT REPORT**

The VP spoke to the report and highlighted the following points:

- The college reported on the details of safeguarding referrals including trends in different categories
- The top three categories for safeguarding were dominated by mental health concerns.
- Mental health remains the top category, with proactive measures like mental health ambassadors and collaborations with universities enhancing support.
- The oversight of vulnerable learners and the improved communication with curriculum teams.
- Appropriate Safeguarding and Prevent training with contextualised content for governors has now been identified and will be rolled out in December.
- The report highlights early identification of learners and fewer repeat referrals, indicating targeted outcomes and timely support.

The Committee raised and discussed the following points:

- A member asked about the increase in vulnerable learners and whether it was due to better identification or an actual increase in incidents. The VP responded that it was a mix of both, with improved onboarding processes and communication with local authorities. The Principal added that the increase in overall student numbers and national policy changes could lead to more vulnerable students joining the college in the future .
- The Chair queried the reduction in asylum seekers between 2023/24 and 2024/25, which the VP explained was due to relocation to other areas in the UK.
- A member asked about the use of mental health and counselling services, noting the upward trend in referrals. The VP confirmed that the trend was in line with national trends and with students empowered to discuss their mental health and access timely support.

The committee reinforced the importance of safeguarding and prevent measures and thanked the VP for his report which provided a clear overview of the college's ongoing effective work and positive outcomes.

**The Committee noted the report.**

**153. COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS ANNUAL REPORT**

The DPCQ presented a summary of complaints and compliments for the 2024/25 academic year, and highlighted the following:

- The increase in the number of complaints alongside a rise in student numbers, compared to last year. Despite the increase, complaints remained below 1% of the total student population.
- The complaints were varied, ranging from issues with assessment and exams to disagreements with diagnostic placements.
- 14 Compliments were received from students, staff, parents and external visitors.

The Principal highlighted the rising trend of complaints generated through AI tools, such as ChatGPT, which has made it easier for students to file complaints. She also noted the link between welfare complaints and the increasing mental health issues among students, stressing the college's duty of care to both the individual and the wider student and staff body.

The Committee raised and discussed the following points:

- A member questioned the categorisation of admissions within organisational welfare, suggesting it might be more helpful to separate them. The Principal explained that while this could be done, it would complicate year-on-year comparisons due to the varied nature of complaints.
- A member raised concerns about the time-consuming nature of data subject access requests, particularly those generated by AI. The Principal acknowledged the challenge and agreed this was very time and resource intensive but necessary to be compliant.

The discussion concluded with the Chair commending the executive manager for her efficient handling of complaints and the comprehensive report she prepared. The Principal echoed this sentiment, recognising the manager's hard work and dedication in managing the complaints process and ensuring they were dealt with within the policy timeframes.

**The Committee noted the report.**

**154. RISK REGISTER REVIEW**

The DPCQ presented the Risk Register showing pre and post mitigation scorings, and controls in place to mitigate risks identified for curriculum and quality. All key risk areas have been updated with recent controls and management activities. The main areas of risk have been discussed previously in the meeting. The risk associated with recruitment remained unchanged due to successful student recruitment. The risk related to quality was lowered slightly, reflecting the college's strong performance in achieving high achievement rates. The DPCQ highlighted the college's adherence to strong standards and expectations in line with the new Ofsted framework.

The Chair questioned why the college was aiming for 'strong standard' rather than 'exceptional.' The Principal and DPCQ explained that the new Ofsted framework requires a secure fit for each criterion, making 'exceptional' a challenging and rarely achieved category. Whilst the college has high aspirations and would aim for exceptional, Ofsted have made it clear it is not expecting any organisation be exceptional across the board and so it is important to manage stakeholder perceptions. The Principal shared insights from the AOC conference, where Ofsted conceded that 'meet standards' is a high bar, comparable to the previous 'good' rating. More will be learned as the new inspections get underway and we can start to see how the toolkits are implemented.

**The Committee received and noted the updated College Risk Register.**

**155. ANY OTHER ITEMS OF URGENT BUSINESS**

None

**156. ITEMS TO BE ADDRESSED AT FUTURE MEETINGS OF THE COMMITTEE**

The Committee is asked to note that the agendas for future meetings will include items as per the agreed business cycle for 2025/26.

**157. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

- 10 February 2026
- 23 June 2026

**18.22 finish**

**These minutes have been approved by the Curriculum and Quality Committee and signed by the Chair as a correct record.**

Alison Morris

10 February 2026

**Signed**

**Date**