

Wirral Metropolitan College Board of Governors Meeting Minutes

Commercially sensitive information has been redacted in line with the College's FOI policy

Date: 22 October 2025

Time: 17:00 – 19:00

Location: College Boardroom

Present: Jo Henney, Gary Baines, Gill Banks, Paul Gaskell, Penny Haughan, Karen Lowe, Phil Vickerman, Debbie Wilkinson, Simon Wrigley

In attendance: Ste Bailey (*item 6 only*), Christine Carter, Phil Jones, Louise Rhodes, Lesley Venables, Kevin Williams

1. Welcome and Apologies

Chair welcomed attendees. Apologies were received from Ian Evans, Ali Amirkhalili, and Paul Smith.

2. Declarations of Interest

No new declarations were made.

3.1 Approval of Previous Minutes Minutes of

the meetings held on:

- 26 March 2025 – Approved
- 4 June 2025 – Approved
- 2 July 2025 – Approved

3.3 Matters Arising and Progress Report

Governors endorsed the “10 Things” strategic summary and agreed it should be a standing agenda item.

Action: Executive to produce a KPI dashboard with narrative commentary to support governor oversight and challenge. **Owner:** Gill Banks (Principal)

3.4 Governors noted the following matters which had been approved and included in the agenda for awareness:

- The appointment of Louise Rhodes as Governance Professional, taking over from Lesley Venables.

- The appointment of Jim Parker as a co-opted member of the Quality & Standards Scrutiny Committee.
 - The subcontracting provision for 2025-26.
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4. Principal's Update

Headline Performance Data:

- Overall predicted achievement rate: **86.1%**
- 16–18 achievement: **82.2%** (1.2% below NR)
- 19+ achievement: **89.7%** (1.9% above NR)
- Pass rates: **94.8%** overall
- Apprenticeship achievement: **70.7%** (10.2% above NR) **Governor Challenge**

and Discussion:

- Retention vs Achievement

Q: Is there an inverse correlation between retention and outcomes? Are we filtering out students who won't achieve?

A (Principal): Actually the opposite. We're supporting those who remain with tailored interventions. Exclusions are behaviour-related.

- School Engagement

Q: What are the barriers to working more closely with schools?

A (Principal): Competition and retention in sixth forms. [REDACTED]

- Promotion of Success

Q: Are we doing enough to shout about the good work we're doing?

A (Principal): We're developing a Community maildrop and considering PR support.

Actions:

- Develop PR strategy with governor input **Owner:** Gill Banks, Principal
 - Update and monitor recruitment plan
Owner: Phil Jones, Vice Principal, Quality, Adults & Commercial
 - Streamline subcontractor reporting into committee oversight **Owner:** Phil Jones, Vice Principal, Quality, Adults & Commercial
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5. Chair's Update

The Chair had attended the recent graduation ceremony and described the event as 'joyful.' She had engaged with the students and their families and offered her warmest congratulations on behalf of the Board on their achievements.

In addition, the Chair reported that she had been involved in college recruitment, had attended committee meetings, and had held regular catch-up meetings with the Principal.

The Board was informed that, following a recent strategic meeting, the college had been partnered with a National Leader of Governance to provide strategic support. After review, he was of the opinion that governance was generally strong and support would be offered around developing KPIs and preparing for Ofsted inspection.

6. Safeguarding Update

Annual safeguarding report presented by Ste Bailey, Director of Specialist Provision & Support. Key points:

- Increase in crisis cases (7 vs 3 at same point last year)
- Crisis line and Talk Campus app proving effective
- NNECL award received; action plan in place
- Policy updated to reflect increased reports of honour-based abuse **Governor**

Comments and Challenges:

- External Support:

Q: Are you getting sufficient support from external agencies outside college hours? A (SB): Yes, though services are under pressure. CAMHS engagement is being strengthened.

- **Policy Review:**

Q: Should we include change logs in policies to explain updates and their impact? Chair: Supported the idea. Principal confirmed policy cycle is well managed and welcomed the suggestion.

Governors acknowledged the complexity and volume of safeguarding work at the college and thanked SB and his team for their hard work and dedication.

Decisions:

- Safeguarding Policy approved **Actions:**
- Governors to complete updated safeguarding training **Owner:** Gill Banks / Governance Professional

- Include change logs in future policy updates
Owner: Ste Bailey, Director of Specialist Provision & Support
- Chase Wirral SG Partnership approval
Owner: Ste Bailey, Director of Specialist Provision & Support

7. Outcomes and Ofsted Preparation Key Data Highlights:

- Achievement rates improving across all age groups
- GCSE English high grades remain below national average • Apprenticeship outcomes up 16.5% for second year • Notable departmental performance:
 - Employability & Progression: 96.3% achievement
 - Prep4Life: 94.6% achievement
 - Business (16–18): 38.5% achievement – flagged for review **Governor**

Comments and Challenges:

- Home-Educated Students:

Q: Are we building relationships with home educators? These students often struggle. A (Principal): Yes, we're aware and working on it. Many early withdrawals may be linked to this group.

- Business Provision:

Q: The achievement gap in business between age groups suggests students may be choosing it without clear direction.

SLT: Agreed and committed to reviewing the provision.

Actions:

- Extend future Board meetings to two hours **Owner:** Governance Professional
- Continue departmental deep dives to inform SAR **Owner:** Phil Jones
- Review business provision for 16–18 cohort
Owner: Curriculum SLT

8. Strategic Objectives 2025–26

Strategic objectives and KPIs reviewed and approved.

Governor Comments and Challenges:

- **People Strategy:**

Q: The People Strategy is marked TBD – when will it be ready? **A**

(Principal): It's recently developed and will be updated.

- **Observation Targets:**

Q: Is 100% realistic for observations?

A (Principal): Yes – it's a compliance issue.

- **Mandatory Training:**

Q: Should we say '100% of eligible staff' to account for long-term absence? **Chair:**

Supported the amendment.

Decisions:

- **Strategic Objectives approved Actions:**

- Update People Strategy

Owner: Sinead Harrop, Director of People and Organisational Development

- Reframe KPI definitions (e.g. mandatory training)

Owner: Gill Banks, Principal

9. KPI Dashboard Development

Chair outlined plans for a PowerBI dashboard to support governor scrutiny and streamline reporting.

Action: Add risk register filter column for committee use

Owner: Kevin Williams, Vice Principal, Finance & Resource

10. Management Accounts

Forecast outturn of £951k noted. Adjustments included:

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■ Additional NI grants from DfE

■ Increased apprenticeship income from higher-value placements

11. Health and Safety Policy

Policy reviewed and approved.

Decision: Approved (minor updates only)

Owner: Kevin Williams, Vice Principal, Finance & Resource

12–14. Committee Updates

The Chairs of the Governance & Search, QSS, and Audit Committees presented updates.

Governor Comments:

■ Audit:

Q: Cybersecurity is a growing concern – should it be a standing item?

Board: Agreed to add it twice yearly. **Decisions:**

■ Approved: Internal audit plan

■ Approved: whistleblowing policy

■ Approved: regularity self-assessment

■ Approved: that the tendering process be instigated for the contract for internal audit.

■ Approved: G&S Committee recommendation on the reclassification of confidential business **Noted:**

■ FE Commissioner’s report on Weston College (shared for information)

Action: Cybersecurity to be added to Audit agenda twice yearly

Owner: Audit Committee Chair / Kevin Williams

15. Confidential Business

Minutes of 2 July 2025 approved.

Safeguarding update noted.

Summary of Actions and Resolutions

Item	Action/Resolution	Owner
5.1	PR strategy development	Gill Banks
5.2	Recruitment plan update	Phil Jones
5.3	Subcontractor reporting streamlined	Phil Jones
6.1	SG training for governors	Gill Banks / Governance Professional

6.2	Policy change logs included	Ste Bailey
6.3	SG Partnership approval chased	Ste Bailey
7.1	Extend Board meetings to 2 hours	Governance Professional
7.2	Departmental deep dives	Phil Jones
7.3	Review business provision (16–18)	Curriculum SLT
8.1	Update People Strategy	DPOD
8.2	Reframe KPI definitions	Gill Banks
9	Add risk register filter column	Kevin Williams

Item Action/Resolution

Owner

14 Cybersecurity added to Audit agenda Audit Chair / Kevin Williams

APPROVED:

Chair: Jo Henney, Chair of the Board

Date: Wednesday 17 December 2025