



# THE WINDSOR FOREST COLLEGES GROUP

## MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE QUALITY & CURRICULUM COMMITTEE

Thursday 5 March 2026 at 5.00pm (*online via Zoom*)

|                |   |  |
|----------------|---|--|
| PRESENT:       | Signe Sutherland<br>Jo Croft<br>Jacob Clay<br>Nathan Garat<br>Sam Marshall-Davies<br>Gillian May<br>Antonia Spinks<br>Sarah Waller<br>Alison Wheatley | Committee Chair<br>Chair of Corporation<br>Teaching Staff Governor – Sixth Form<br>Governor<br>Governor<br>Group Principal & Chief Executive<br>Governor<br>Teaching Staff Governor - FE<br>Support Staff Governor                   |
| APOLOGIES:     | Jane Fawkes<br>Rob Lewis<br>Riley Campisi Dignan<br>Ketija Oyeniran   | Governor<br>Governor<br>Student Governor FE<br>Student Governor Sixth Form   |
| IN ATTENDANCE: | Naomie Bailey<br>Gary Dixon<br>Tracy Reeve<br>Karen Griffiths<br>Sinead O'Donoghue<br>Laura Peters  | Group Vice Principal (VP) Adults, Apprenticeships & Commercial<br>Principal FE<br>Group Director of Governance<br>Acting Deputy Group Principal<br>Principal Sixth Form<br>Group VP Student Services, SEND and alternative provision |

| <u>MINUTE</u> |   | <u>ACTION</u> |
|---------------|---|---------------|
| <u>No</u>     |   |               |
| 1.            | <p><b><u>Apologies for Absence</u></b><br/>Apologies had been received as shown above. The Group Director of Governance (TR) informed the meeting that Antonia Spinks would be slightly late joining.</p>   |               |
| 2.            | <p><b><u>Notification of any other urgent business</u></b><br/>There was no other business notified.</p>  |               |
| 3.            | <p><b><u>Declarations of Interest</u></b><br/>No member declared a conflict of interest with the agenda.</p>  |               |
| 4.            | <p><b><u>Minutes of the previous meeting held on 25 November 2025</u></b><br/>The Minutes of the previous meeting held on 25 November 2025, having been previously sent to members, were agreed as a true record and would be taken as signed by the Chair.<br/><b>All Members were agreed.</b></p>   |               |
| 5.            | <p><b><u>Matters Arising from the Previous Meeting Held on 25 November 2025</u></b><br/>The Group Director of Governance presented a report which confirmed that all matters arising had been actioned or would be covered within the current agenda. The proposed changes in relation to the annual complaints report were commended.</p> <p><b>NOTED</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b><u>Examples of governors' data dashboard</u></b><br/>The Group Director of Governance (TR) presented an example of a one-page 'pictogram' summarising key performance indicators for governors; this had been cited as an example of good practice – commended by Ofsted – at a recent AoC webinar. The CEO and Group Principal (GM) did not support the use of this format as she thought it was overly simplistic for governors. GM reminded the meeting of the very comprehensive DfE data dashboard that was available for governors to access. <p><b>NOTED</b></p> </li></ul> |               |

## Curriculum Risk Register and Academic Report

### ➤ **Curriculum Risk Register**

The Deputy Group Principal (KG) presented the updated Curriculum Risk Register for 2025/26, summarising key risks to curriculum quality, delivery, compliance and growth. Governors were assured that the risk register aligned with the strategic priorities and Quality Review Board outcomes. KG confirmed that the curriculum risk register continued to reflect both acute (immediate) and chronic (long-term) risks affecting curriculum and quality performance. Governors were assured that overall risk levels remained stable, with enhanced controls in several key areas including recruitment, data integrity, and attendance.

The meeting considered the Risk Register alongside an academic report which provided more detail on mitigations in place. Current strategic risks were noted as:

- Apprenticeship achievement rates below benchmark in specific standards
- Attendance below KPI in certain curriculum areas
- Financial viability of some adult provision under review
- Inconsistent implementation of new processes across sites

KG highlighted the controls and improvement actions already in place:

- Enhanced oversight and monitoring by the newly appointed curriculum leadership team
- Targeted performance intervention at standard level
- Curriculum rationalisation and strengthening of key quality assurance processes
- Cross group moderation and quality assurance to ensure consistency

The meeting considered the key risks on the Risk Register in more detail.

**Risk 1: Apprenticeships (Risk score of 20 'red')**: The meeting noted a detailed update on improvement work taking place in this area of provision. Governors were reminded that the College had reached out to the DfE and the FE Commissioner (FEC) for support after apprenticeship performance dipped below the minimum level of performance for 2024-25. The Group VP leading this provision (NB) gave the meeting a detailed update on progress with the improvement plan put in place after the support received from the FE Commissioner's Team. NB confirmed that the draft FEC Health Check report from February 2026 highlighted that the WFCG apprenticeships provision was showing signs of recovery and stabilisation. The report noted significant improvements in retention, but there was still notable variability in performance across different campuses and apprenticeship standards. NB confirmed that this would require more consistent frameworks for curriculum planning, progress monitoring and employer engagement. The meeting was assured that all areas noted in the FEC report were already areas of intervention. The meeting applauded the clarity of the nine improvement actions. The Chair asked that any future curriculum changes to the apprenticeship offer should be brought back to Quality & Curriculum committee. SMD congratulated the apprenticeship team on the successful reinstatement of direct claims for electrical and plumbing provision; the audit to secure this had been very rigorous. KG confirmed that this was an important achievement.

**Risk 2: Recruitment and retention of teaching staff (Risk score of 16 'amber')**: KG informed the meeting that this risk had been raised in profile as management were very mindful of staff wellbeing. Recent increases in complicated complaints were a concern; this was now more common since AI made it easier to submit a complicated and legal focussed complaint. KG informed the meeting that the College complaints policy had been recently updated and now reflected the ability for staff to refuse to deal with aggressive or vexatious complainants. Training and mentoring offerings had been strengthened to give staff more support.

**Risk 5: Poor data integrity risk funding compliance, quality monitoring and safeguarding interventions (Risk score of 12 'green')**. This risk had been introduced to ensure clear Board visibility of regulatory and reputational risks. Stronger reporting facilitated by the Strata system from April 2026 would allow better in-year visibility for governors and managers. KG highlighted that this had been discussed during the recent support visit from the FEC Advisor, in particular, how well learners could articulate their safeguarding knowledge to their specific environment. The meeting was pleased to note that WFCG was now refining all processes to reflect the four-site college group and the new Ofsted framework.

The Chair (SS) commended the improvement in Apprenticeship retention secured so far and asserted the importance of ensuring that this followed through to improved achievement. KG

reminded the meeting that this would take time to be reflected in the data due to the length of the apprenticeship programmes – some were as long as four years. However, KG suggested that improved retention demonstrated that the WFCG apprenticeships team had recognised the issues and were dealing with them. SS sought confirmation on whether there was any concerns over attendance and retention across other elements of provision. KG confirmed that there was a close watch on Windsor College as there was a slight dip. Principal Sixth Form (SO'D) confirmed that although this was not significant yet, management had asked staff to focus on an attendance drive (this had commenced after February half-term).

➤ **Quality update: learning walks**

The Quality & Curriculum Committee considered an update on the recent cycle of learning walks that had taken place across all college provisions (Further Education, Sixth Form, Adult ESOL & Apprenticeships). KG confirmed that the vast majority of lessons were reported as consistently meeting and exceeding expectations and that staff demonstrated highly effective practice across the seven DfE Teaching Standards. Core strengths such as strong subject knowledge, positive student teacher rapport and calm, productive learning environments were embedded across the college. With such a strong baseline of teaching quality established, the Curriculum Leadership Team's focus was now shifting to consistency and standardisation. The primary objective was to align expectations of exactly what was expected in a "good" lesson across all four sites. Work was underway to guarantee consistency in how lessons were observed, evaluated and reported by different leaders across different campuses. Actions being implemented to take this forward included the following:

- Targeted training for Heads of Department
- Cross provision observer pairing and peer reviews
- Standardisation of reporting
- Introduction of inclusion in all learning walks

**The Curriculum Risk Register and Academic Report were NOTED and RECEIVED.**

7. **New Ofsted Toolkit, Self-Assessment Report and curriculum planning**

➤ **New Ofsted Toolkit**

Principal FE (GD) presented a reminder for Q&C Members on the new format for the Ofsted Toolkit. GD informed the meeting that the changes within the new Ofsted framework placed greater emphasis on:

- Learner experience over time
- Curriculum coherence and sequencing
- Attendance, behaviour and attitudes
- Personal development
- Impact of leadership and management

GD highlighted that the new inspection regime had removed the overall grade which was previously awarded; there were now 16 individual grades. These were made up of three grades: a) Curriculum, Teaching & Training, b) Achievement, and c) Participation & Development for each of the four provision types (16-18, adults, apprenticeships and high needs). In addition, there were four whole provider grades for Contribution to Skills, Leadership and Governance, Inclusion, and Safeguarding. As with the previous regime the Safeguarding judgement was not graded but classified as 'met' or 'not met'.

The new grading was awarded on a five-point scale – exceptional, strong standard, expected standard (equivalent to the previous grade of Good), needs attention (previously graded as Requires Improvement), urgent improvement (previously Inadequate). The meeting noted that a mobile version of the Ofsted dashboard for each provider was also available to improve access for users, parents etc. The meeting talked about the increased focus on inclusion with five specific categories of learners - Disadvantaged (free school meals & low income), SEND (EHCP, high needs, ALS), Looked after children (LAC) & Care Leavers, Youth Justice system and 'other barriers to learning'. GD highlighted that 'other barriers' would include students without grade 9 English and maths GCSE which was the vast majority of the FE cohort. There would need to be an ongoing focus on teaching staff knowing their individual learners needs for any additional support. Governors discussed the new framework and the number of grades. It was suggested that it would be key for staff to maintain a really clear

focus on providing very good Teaching Learning and Assessment and not get overly distracted by all the other aspects e.g. inclusion. It was agreed that Heads of Department (HODs) would need a very clear focus on key departmental data under the new framework.

➤ ***Self-Assessment Report (SAR) and curriculum planning update***

Principal Sixth-Form (SO'D) outline the work that had been undertaken to update the format of the self-assessment process at WFCG so that it aligned with the new Ofsted regime. The meeting noted that the WFCG Self-Assessment Report model and curriculum planning process had been revised so that they aligned to the new Ofsted framework to ensure inspection readiness and stronger internal quality assurance. The new format Quality Improvement Plans (QIPs) for 2025-26 were now being used in the termly Quality Review Boards which ensured responsiveness rather than retrospective evaluation. The new format had moved to a document where the data self-populated and the language used made strong links with the new Ofsted language including the grading descriptors within the Ofsted toolkit. The revised Self-Assessment Review process has been implemented to ensure that:

- a. Judgements were evidence-based and data-led
- b. Leaders now focussed on impact rather than narrative description
- c. Priorities for improvement were tightly aligned to measurable outcomes

The changes implemented would ensure that the SAR was a live management tool rather than an annual compliance exercise. Senior leaders would review departmental SARs through a structured moderation process to ensure consistency of judgement across sites; this consistency would be crucial to demonstrate in any future Ofsted inspection. SO'D confirmed that the response to the new format and enhanced termly review from Heads of Department had been positive. KG confirmed that the plan for 2026-27 was to bring governors a termly update against the college key performance indicators and the QIP progress as well as position with regard to the Ofsted descriptors and judgements. This would allow governors and management to have a clearer sight of updated judgements and risks.

Governors (SMD) sought more detail on the work that was being undertaken to shift previous behaviours with regard to overly narrative SARs. SMD was keen to understand what training was being provided for Heads of Department (HoDs) and how this would fit with the college performance management cycle. KG informed the meeting that the move to a new data system Strata (away from ProAchieve) would make this easier for staff. The new system was more user friendly and full training was being provided for HoDs. Initial feedback had been positive as the new system saved time (due to the ability to pre-populate the QIP with the current data). HoDs could see the benefit of the changes and appreciated the value in changing the focus from looking back to thinking forward; in this sense the QIP was more important than the SAR. The new Strata system pushed HoDs into looking at the data in order to justify their judgements and helped management to plan the report cycle. KG asserted her confidence in the new curriculum management team with a consistent view across all four sites and the focus on quality for all provision types. The Chair sought, and was given, confirmation that the HR team had been involved in implementing this new training.

KG highlighted that a revised Curriculum Planning Workbook and 15 month timeline had been introduced to strengthen strategic curriculum intent, financial sustainability and workforce planning. This approach would ensure that the WFCG curriculum offer responded to demand and enable early identification of courses at risk of under-recruitment. The result would be more accurate staffing utilisation planning and an improved integration between curriculum, MIS and HR. This would be even more important as the FE sector moved into a period of considerable curriculum reform. KG confirmed that this new curriculum planning process would ensure that WFCG was in a good position to develop its Strategic Transition Plan Statement (STPS), outlining how the Group would respond and change its delivery in light of the curriculum reforms from 2027. Governors noted that the STPS would be submitted to the DfE from all FE colleges in summer 2026.

**NOTED**

8. **Higher Education (HE) and Adult provision**

➤ ***Higher Education (HE) & Access to HE:*** The meeting noted the positive update on HE provision across the Group. KG highlighted that current enrolments remained small but stable, with a clear strategy to grow provision selectively in areas aligned to local skills

demand and financial sustainability. The meeting was assured that HE curriculum planning was being adapted to reflect modular delivery expectations under the Lifelong Learning Entitlement (LLE), ensuring flexibility, credit accumulation and future funding readiness. HE provision continued to strengthen alignment with local labour market priorities, supporting progression into high-demand sectors and responding to Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs). There continued to be a clear focus on the oversight of quality and outcomes with continuation, completion and progression rates under active review; performance was monitored against Office for Students (OfS) expectations. The Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) indicators were also now being used in preparation for compulsory compliance with this kitemark and its associated standards in 2027/28. The meeting was assured that HE governance arrangements continued to ensure compliance with OfS conditions, including oversight of student outcomes, quality assurance and financial sustainability. The key risks in relation to HE were noted as recruitment volatility under modular reform, increased competition and funding complexity. Mitigations include targeted marketing, employer partnerships and strengthened data monitoring.

Key development in HE in light of the Post-16 White paper: The meeting noted a PowerPoint presentation from the Group lead on HE (AW). Changes included the modularisation of HE from January 2027 in line with the LLE. There would also be a new format for student loans. AW highlighted that the role of employers and the Local Skills Improvement Plans would be key to future curriculum planning for HE. AW outlined what the Group was doing to prepare for the changes coming down the line in 2027/28 including the detail and work involved when WFCG would have to apply for the TEF kitemark. The likely timeline for this was not yet known – it was a phased approach from OfS – but it was likely to be in 2028.

**Adult provision:** KG informed the meeting that adult provision continued to be reviewed to ensure sustainability and alignment to local skills needs. Current priorities included:

- Ensuring viable group sizes
- Aligning adult curriculum to regional skills priorities
- Improving attendance and completion rates
- Agreeing a future spend strategy on adult funding allocations, in particular a clear strategy on ESOL spending in light of external funding pressures.
- Maintaining close watch on the current allocation spend.

The meeting discussed the ongoing pressure on the adult funding budget and the reduction in direct DfE adult funding that would occur in 2026-27 as a result of devolution. KG reminded the meeting that in devolved local authorities adult funding would come via the local authorities; this would not be allocated automatically and learners would have to apply for their funding. Governors were reminded that adult enrolment was currently halted at Slough and Langley College as there was no additional money available for 2025-26. Current fears were in relation to the impact on the community provision which was likely to be defunded as non-regulated provision; this would affect ESOL and the Southall provision.

**The HE update was NOTED.**

## 9. SEN update

### ➤ SEN (Special Educational Needs) Reform

The meeting noted a paper for background reading which informed the Board of a recent government publication on SEN. On February 23, 2026, the Government released their Education White Paper titled “Every Child Achieving and Thriving.” Governors noted that this document outlined a 10-year vision for the English education system, focusing on narrowing the “disadvantage gap” and implementing a generational reform of the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) system.

Group Vice Principal (LP) confirmed that there would be an update to the SEN Code of Practice; this statutory guidance must be followed and WFCG would review its process in line with the new guidance. LP informed the meeting that government was currently looking at the curriculum assessment review with a focus on inclusion; the aim would be to have more SEN children in mainstream provision and fewer students with EHCPs. There would be more specialist resource units in schools. The government were planning to invest £1.6 billion into the mainstream system from Early Years provision through to secondary schools and colleges. Teachers would be given the resources to manage additional needs within a mainstream setting and £200m would be invested into training to upskill teachers with respect to SEN.

There would also be national teaching resources made available through a digital library. Under the new system a 'needs assessment' for SEN learners would have to take place at every transition point; this would be positive as it would enable the college to have access to updated information on learner needs. Other changes would include the creation of 'Youth Matters' which would pump £400m into sports and other activities.

LP asserted the importance of keeping up to date with funding in this complicated area of provision; current thinking was that government funding would be accessed directly by colleges rather than via local authorities. The Chair highlighted the need to think about the two separate areas of SEN provision; the specific provision e.g. foundation learners at Slough and Langley and BCA as well as the SEN learners on college mainstream programmes. LP reminded the meeting that there were currently circa 550 learners at WFCG with EHCPs but an additional 2,500 students with an additional identified learning need. KG highlighted the importance of cross-referencing all of this SEN provision with regard to Ofsted and inclusion. An example of this was the college looking at delivering specific modules in SEN teaching for HE provision.

The meeting noted the key points for future action and were assured that the leadership were aware of and responding to incoming policy change.

**The SEN update was NOTED.**

#### 10. **Applications Report**

The meeting noted the current applications report for 16-19 programmes at 24/02/26 which showed that the Group was 17% (589 learners) ahead of the same position in the prior year for applications. Offers accepted were 44% (489 learners) ahead of the prior year. All four colleges were ahead of the prior year for applications and offers accepted.

GM reminded the meeting that the demographic data did not support this forecast growth so management were treating the figures with caution. The executive team was undertaking a piece of work to apply previous conversion rates to look at curriculum planning. GM confirmed that the college Open Days and evenings had been very busy. She also reminded the meeting that her 'baseline' for enrolment numbers was Animal Management at BCA. This was 84 learners up on last year which gave a positive indication for the BCA enrolment. The two sixth-forms were also doing well and the new level 2 provision was very popular. However, GM confirmed that, as with previous years, the budget for 2026-27 would assume no learner growth; any growth achieved in September 2026 would then have a positive impact on lagged funding for 2027-28. The funding statement for 2026-27 was expected on 18 March 2026 but current expectations were for a lag of circa £1.2m. GM also confirmed that a government announcement on their curriculum reform proposals including the new V Levels was expected during the next few weeks.

**The applications update was NOTED**

- ***In-year Funding 2025-26***

Governors noted a report which confirmed that the college was meeting or exceeding all elements of its DfE and Adult Skills Budget for 2025/26. The meeting noted the progress against the detailed targets in the strategic plan for all key elements of funding.

**The applications update was NOTED.**

#### 11. **Landex Peer Review of BCA**

The meeting noted the formal report and the findings of the Landex review (November 2025) which had reflected positively on:

- i) The strengthening of BCA's identity within the wider Group following merger
- ii) Improved financial health, enabling targeted investment in land-based provision
- iii) Strategic estate development aligned to curriculum delivery
- iv) Clear progress in quality processes and staff development

The review had identified clear next steps and four recommendations which were developmental and aligned closely with existing Group priorities around teaching consistency, challenge and intervention. Q&C Committee members were reminded that this had been discussed at the previous committee meeting in November in advance of the formal report being available.

**The Landex Peer Review Report was NOTED**

12. **Dates and Times of Future Meetings**

The last meeting date for 2025/26 was noted as: Thursday 11 June 2026, 5.00pm (online via Zoom).

**NOTED**

13. **Any Urgent Business**

➤ **Goodbye to CEO & Group Principal (GM)**

The committee chair reminded the meeting that this would be GM's last Quality & Curriculum Committee meeting at WFCG before she left the group on 31 May to take up her new position as one of the Deputy FE Commissioners. SS thanked GM for her commitment to WFCG over the last six years and for her term as Principal of BCA for eight years before that. The meeting wished her well in her new role.

***A minute of thanks was recorded for Gillian May***

There was no other urgent business notified.

**The meeting ended at 6.05pm**

Chair .....

Date .....