



Minutes of the Full Governing Body Meeting held on Monday 6 October 2025 at 5.30pm in the College Conference Room

Present:	Patrick Alcantara	Foundation Governor
	Sarah Carroll	Foundation Governor (<i>via Teams</i>)
	Brother Ben	Foundation Governor
	Janet Gater	Principal
	Andrew Jones	Co-opted Governor
	Mick Martin (Vice Chair)	Foundation Governor
	Darren Melling	Foundation Governor
	Samuel Moore	Student Governor
	Rob Peacock	Foundation Governor
	Andrew Rannard	Foundation Governor
	Amelia Southward	Co-opted Governor

In attendance: Michelle Williams (*Vice Principal, Finance, Resources & Systems*)
Laura Forsyth (*Vice Principal, Curriculum, Quality & Pastoral*)
Lauren Boswell (*Assistant Principal, Student Development & Support*)
Peter Murphy (*Assistant Principal, Quality of Teaching, Learning & Staffing*)
Liz Walls (*Assistant Principal, Vocational & Super Curriculum*)
Ruth Potter (*Clerk to Governors*)

PART 1

In the absence of the Chair of Governors, the Vice Chair took over the chairing of the meeting and welcomed new Student Governor, Samuel Moore, to his first meeting.

1. ROUTINE AND STANDING ITEMS

1.1 Opening Prayer and Catholic life update (*previously circulated*)

Peter Murphy (Assistant Principal) opened the first full Governing Body meeting of the academic year with a moment of reflection, following which all present joined in the Opening Prayer.

The Chair welcomed Mollie Swadkins (Senior Pastoral Tutor, Foundation Learning) to the meeting and invited her to provide an update to governors on the youth pilgrimage to Lourdes that had taken place during the summer holidays. A number of Carmel students had attended the pilgrimage and a brief overview of the itinerary was provided. It was noted that a range of fundraising activities had taken place in College to support student participation. Applications for the 2026 Lourdes pilgrimage had recently opened and it was reported that a number of applications had already been received. The benefits of the youth pilgrimage were highlighted.

The Assistant Principal presented a summary of the other activities supporting Catholic life across College. This included: whole-College strategic actions, General RE and 10:10 Ethics and Values Programme, College societies and fundraising

events, daily prayer life and chaplaincy services. An update was provided on the latest attendance data for 10:10 Ethics and Values sessions.

Governors' questions were invited.

Q – When does the College expect to receive its Catholic Schools Inspection?

A – Next year.

Q – Catholic students represent 30% of total enrolments; what arrangements are in place to support students of other faiths?

A – Multi-functional prayer room available and 10:10 Ethics and Values sessions explore other faiths. Catholic Social Teaching approach encourages inclusive community across College.

The Chair thanked the Assistant Principal and Mollie Swadkins for their informative updates.

Resolved:

- **That the Catholic life and Lourdes youth pilgrimage 2025 updates be received and noted.**

Mollie Swadkins left the meeting at this point.

1.2 **Declarations of interest**

Governors were invited to declare whether they had any direct or indirect personal, prejudicial or pecuniary interest or conflict of interest in any matter which formed part of the agenda for this meeting or was likely to be discussed at the meeting. Rob Peacock updated members on a new interest which would be added to the register.

1.3 **Apologies for absence**

Apologies had been received and accepted from the following board members:

- Kevin Crooks – Staff Governor
- John Fogarty – Foundation Governor
- Sue Jarvis – Co-opted Governor
- Graeme Slater – Foundation Governor
- Helen Stevenson – Foundation Governor

The meeting was declared quorate.

1.4 **Items to be included under urgent business**

There were no items submitted for consideration as urgent business.

1.5 **Minutes of the Governing Body meeting held on 1 July 2025 (previously circulated)**

The minutes of the Full Governing Body (FGB) meeting held on 1 July 2025 were (a) approved and the Chair authorised to sign them in accordance with Article 12(3) of the Articles of Government and (b) publication was authorised in accordance with Article 13.

1.6 **Matters arising from the minutes (previously circulated)**

Governors noted the action log prepared by the Clerk. A point of clarification was sought in relation to Action 5 (minute 7.1), regarding link governor roles and responsibilities. The Chair confirmed the link governor roles approved by the

Governing Body. A standing item on the full Governing Body agenda provided a mechanism for regular reports back from link governor termly visits to College. As it was still early in the Autumn Term, only one such report had been included in the papers for the current meeting. The remaining reports would be included in the papers for the December meeting.

Prior to presenting the Safeguarding Annual Report (item 2.1), the Assistant Principal (Student Development & Support) and Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) conducted the annual safeguarding refresher training for governors on Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) 2025.

2. SAFEGUARDING

2.1 Safeguarding Annual Report (previously circulated)

The Assistant Principal (Student Development & Support) referred governors to her annual report for academic year 2024-25 and highlighted the following key points:

- overall decrease in incidents logged on CPOMS compared to 2023-24
- newly appointed Pastoral Director for Safeguarding and Safeguarding Assistant to lead on daily operational practice, thereby releasing capacity for more strategic oversight by the DSL/Assistant Principal
- validation of effective safeguarding arrangements by Ofsted during inspection in December 2024
- implementation of Cedar secure thread to manage sensitive information and CPOMS daily incidents
- positive outcomes for vulnerable students achieved in summer examinations
- plans for year ahead including key action plans and audits and work towards attaining the Carnegie Mental Health Award.

Discussion ensued on the criteria and timeline for the Carnegie Mental Health Award, following which governors' questions were invited. These included:

Q – Has the increase in student mental health issues arising from the Covid lockdown started to return to previous levels?

A – Yes. Students seem to be settling in well to College life and demonstrating increasing resilience. There is, however, a higher number of lower level mental health concerns despite the reduction in more serious issues.

Q – Did the push to highlight male mental health result in increased referral data from male students?

A – Yes. There was an increase from male students following the mental health talk from a male sports professional. All students had the option to access face-to-face counselling support or to use student assistance programme online.

Q – What form does online counselling and support take?

A – Person available to speak to via telephone helpline that operates 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Also, an online app that provides a variety of support options for students to access such as: instant messaging, online resources, video consultation. Key benefit arising from all year round access to support, providing coverage over College holidays and weekends.

The Chair thanked the Assistant Principal for her comprehensive report and commended, in particular, the excellent outcomes for vulnerable students.

Resolved:

- **That the Safeguarding Annual Report be received and noted.**

Sarah Carroll left the meeting at this point due to technical difficulties.

3. PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

3.1 Staff Perceptions Annual Report *(previously circulated)*

The Assistant Principal (Quality of Teaching, Learning & Staffing) presented this report and highlighted the following aspects:

- Completion rate of 53% for annual survey (2024, 58%)
- Comparable data showed improvement in all but one category
- Free text comments reported
- Key themes highlighted in the report – positive feedback and areas for development
- Action plan to address lower scoring areas
- Carmel Pulse feedback collected half-termly in addition to annual survey
- Summary of Carmel staff wellbeing support
- Reduction in staff absence rate and staff turnover rate

Discussion ensued on the key themes highlighted within the report, following which the Chair thanked the Assistant Principal and invited governors' questions.

Q – Was any benchmark data available from comparable colleges?

A – Difficult to identify suitable benchmark data as there are differing approaches to staff surveys across colleges.

Resolved:

- **That the Staff Perceptions Annual Report be received and noted.**

3.2 Examination Results 2025 *(previously circulated)*

The Vice Principal (Curriculum, Quality & Pastoral) reported on an excellent set of examination results, the full details of which were contained within her report to governors. She updated governors on the recent position with reviews of marking which had resulted in a considerable number of successful challenges to A Level grades. As a result, the College's six dimensions report had been re-run to show some slight improvements.

The following key points were highlighted:

- A Level raw results – increase in all grade bands compared to 2024. Exceeded national averages (both JCQ averages and sixth-form college averages).
- A Level ALPS data – outstanding value added sustained (ALPS 2). Drill down data illustrated:
 - reduction in underperforming subjects
 - improved performance in previously underperforming subjects
 - differentials between specific cohorts minimal.
- Applied General Qualifications (AGQs) raw results – marginal dip on high grades compared to 2024 but overall pass rate returned to 100%. All AGQs performing above sector average.
- AGQs ALPS data – sustained outstanding ALPS banding (ALPS 2). Drill down data illustrated:
 - elimination of underperforming subjects
 - no differential between specific cohorts
- Level 3 value added score
- Six Dimensions analysis reports for specific cohorts, including gender, ethnic group, socio economic group, and learners with learning difficulties and/or

disabilities (LLDD) – all cohorts performed above the sector average for A Levels and AGQs.

- Slight three-year decline in BTEC Diploma value added score noted from Six Dimensions analysis.
- Progress of specific departments – high volume subjects, previously under-performing subjects.
- Outcomes for Art Foundation, GCSE English and Mathematics re-sits, and Foundation Learning.
- Retention rate improvement compared to 2024.

This data was used by the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) to identify strategic priorities for the year ahead to ensure continued focus on quality improvement. The Vice Principal updated governors on the priorities for 2025-26 which included:

- maintaining and sustaining performance across College
- maintaining and sustaining performance in subjects of strategic interest
- eliminating small pockets of underperformance (one subject area in formal subject review)
- improving BTEC Diploma value added score in Six Dimensions report.

Progress reports on these priority areas would be provided to governors in line with the cycle of business.

Following an update from the Vice Principal on the current student destinations data, comments and questions were invited from governors.

Q – Six Dimensions analysis includes new ‘high grades’ report for A Levels. Is this also available for BTECs and Diplomas?

A – No. New report is only available for A Levels this year.

Following final discussion of value added scores, the Chair thanked the Vice Principal for her report and congratulated all staff and students on an excellent set of examination results.

Resolved:

- **That the 2025 examination results report be received and noted.**

Samuel Moore left the meeting at this point.

3.3 **In-year Operating Plan 2025-26** *(previously circulated)*

The Principal referred governors to the draft in-year operating plan. The plan included the focal points and priorities for 2025-26 based on the new three-year strategic plan. Key actions and in-year success criteria were identified for all in-year priorities and progress reports would be provided at termly Governing Body meetings.

The Principal provided an overview of the priorities and actions contained within the plan and discussion ensued on academisation. It was noted that further information was awaited from the Archdiocese of Liverpool on their revised academisation strategy.

The Chair thanked the Principal for her report.

Resolved:

- **That the In-year Operating Plan 2025-26 be approved.**

4. FINANCE AND ESTATES MANAGEMENT

4.1 Student recruitment and retention *(previously circulated)*

The Vice Principal (Finance, Resources & Systems) referred governors to her report which provided detailed data on student enrolments for 2025-26. It was confirmed that the College had over-recruited against planned student numbers for both 16-19 provision and Higher Education (HE). An update on the reported numbers was provided and staff recruitment activity in response to this over recruitment was reported. The budgetary impact of the additional staffing was highlighted and an explanation provided of anticipated in-year funding for both 16-19 and HE.

The Vice Principal reported on a change of government funding policy for providers delivering HE via a franchise agreement. The budgetary implications of this change were highlighted and it was reported that discussions were taking place with the University of Liverpool to agree a way forward.

It was reported that the College's T Level course had once again proved unviable to run due to insufficient student enrolments.

Drill down enrolment data was provided by assigned area, gender, ethnicity, religion, local authority area, and feeder school.

The Vice Principal proceeded to present a summary income and expenditure report highlighting estimated changes to the previously approved financial plan. The net effect was estimated to be a surplus of £81k.

The Chair thanked the Vice Principal for her comprehensive report and governors' questions were invited.

Q – Any issues experienced in recruiting high quality staff?

A – No, all appointments made, however increasingly difficult to identify staff in certain subject areas, leading to a reduced pool of candidates.

Q – Any insurance cover in place for staff absence and associated supply staff cover?

A – No. Investigated this thoroughly and determined that it was not cost effective.

Resolved:

- **That the student recruitment and retention report be received and noted.**
- **That the increase to the staffing budget be approved retrospectively.**

4.2 Financial Update – Interim Year End Accounts 2025-26 *(previously circulated)*

The Vice Principal (Finance, Resources & Systems) provided an overview of the finance update and interim year-end accounts for 2024-25. The outturn position as at the end of July 2025 was reported to be better than anticipated with an operating surplus of £180k. This included the net FRS17 actuarial adjustment to the pension valuation. All figures were subject to audit.

Governors were referred to the headline performance data for the 12 months to 31 July 2025 and key performance indicators (KPIs) for July 2025. Events impacting the budget over the course of the year were highlighted.

The Vice Principal confirmed that the external auditors had been in College the previous week completing the audit of the financial statements and the regularity audit. The outcome would be reported to the Governing Body at its next meeting.

Resolved:

- **That the year-end financial updates as at 31 July 2025 be noted and approved.**

4.3 Staff pay awards (previously circulated)

The Vice Principal (Finance, Resources & Systems) updated governors on the national pay negotiations undertaken by the Sixth Form Colleges Association (SFCA) on behalf of the college. A support staff pay agreement had been reached for an across the board pay increase of 4% backdated to 1 September 2025 on all NJC support staff pay points. This pay award reflected that already set out in the College's approved budget and therefore would be implemented for eligible staff in the October payroll.

An update was provided on the teaching staff pay negotiations which were ongoing. The outcome would be reported back to the Governing Body at its next meeting.

Resolved:

- **That the support staff pay award be noted and approved.**

5. RISK MANAGEMENT AND AUDIT

5.1 Risk Register and Action Plan (previously circulated)

The Vice Principal (Finance, Resources & Systems) presented the updated Risk Register and Action Plan. The revised document – based upon the College's new Strategic Plan – had been considered by the Audit Committee at its meeting on 23 September 2025 and recommended for approval. The updated significant and contingent risks were highlighted. It was noted that there was one significant risk – regarding options for conversion to an academy – and three contingent risks.

Resolved:

- **That the updated Risk Register be noted and approved.**

5.2 Audit Needs Assessment and Internal Audit Plan 2025-26 (previously circulated)

The Vice Principal (Finance, Resources & Systems) presented the Audit Needs Assessment and Internal Audit Plan for the coming year. The Plan had been prepared by the College's internal auditors, WBG, following consultation with the Chair of Audit Committee, Vice Principal and Clerk and had been recommended for approval by the Audit Committee at its meeting on 23 September 2025. The Plan set out the proposed areas for internal audit during 2025-26 and it was reported that in identifying these areas, full consideration had been given to the College's Risk Register as well as the wider audit universe.

The areas identified were:

- Estates Management (December 2025)
- Exams Processes (December 2025)
- Curriculum Planning (March 2026)
- Overall Financial Controls (March 2026)
- Follow up review (March 2026).

Resolved:

- **That the Audit Needs Assessment and Internal Audit Plan 2025-26 be noted and approved.**

5.3 Audit Committee Annual Report 2024-25 *(previously circulated)*

The Chair of the Audit Committee presented this annual report and confirmed that Audit Committee members had considered it at their meeting on 23 September 2025 and recommended it to the Board for approval. The Audit Committee had concluded that the College's assurance arrangements, framework of governance, risk management and control processes for the use of resources, solvency of the College and the safeguarding of assets were adequate and effective.

Governors' comments and questions were invited on the contents of the report.

Resolved:

- **That the Audit Committee Annual Report 2024-25 be noted and approved.**

6. GOVERNANCE

6.1 Governance and membership update *(previously circulated)*

The Chair referred governors to the Clerk's report and invited her to highlight the key points.

- Parent Governor vacancy – nomination deadline had now passed; one nomination had been received which would be presented to Search & Governance Committee for consideration.
- 'Beyond the Agenda' governance benchmarking opportunity – the Clerk reported that the College would be participating in this research and benchmarking opportunity run by the ImpactEd Group. As part of this project, a survey would be sent imminently to all Board and SLT members for completion.
- Skills, Careers and Digital Technology Link Governor role description – the role description had been updated to include references to digital technology and AI as agreed at the last Board meeting.

Resolved:

- **That the Governance and Membership update be received and noted.**
- **That the updated Skills, Careers and Digital Technology Link Governor role description be approved.**

ACTION

- **All Board and SLT members to complete 'Beyond the Agenda' survey.**

6.2 Policy approval schedule *(previously circulated)*

The Clerk confirmed that she had undertaken a further review of the policy approval framework – building on the work completed last year – to review the College's policy schedule against the updated guidance provided by Eversheds. The purpose of this review had been to ensure that all policies were approved at the appropriate level, freeing up the Board's time to focus on more strategic areas where possible. She referred governors to the areas of proposed change which had been highlighted in the policy review schedule.

The Chair thanked the Clerk for her report and, following discussion, governors suggested that an extended review frequency to take most policies to a triennial review cycle should be explored. This would not impact certain statutory policies that required annual review such as the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy. It was

agreed that the schedule should be reviewed to extend review frequency where possible and brought back to the next Governing Body meeting for consideration. In the meantime, the Governing Body agreed that the highlighted approval changes were appropriate.

Resolved:

- **That the policy approval schedule – including delegated approval levels – be approved.**
- **That further consideration be given to extending review frequencies where possible.**

ACTION – Extend policy review frequency to triennial cycle where appropriate and present updated schedule to the next FGB meeting.

6.3 Annual review of Register of Interests (previously circulated)

The Clerk referred members to the requirement to maintain a register of governors' interests which was available for inspection and published on the College website. Updated declarations of interests had been requested from all board members and the updated register of interests was presented for consideration.

One further update was required to the register, following which it would be published on the College website.

Resolved:

- **That the Register of Interests be received and noted**

ACTION – Clerk to update register and arrange for publication on College website.

6.4 Chair's Action (previously circulated)

The Governing Body considered the Chair's decision to approve minor updates to the Safeguarding and Child Protection Policy and the Governing Body Code of Conduct via the application of Chair's Action.

Resolved:

- **That the Chair's Action be noted**

7. COMMITTEE AND LINK GOVERNOR REPORTS

7.1 Audit Committee draft minutes from 23 September 2025 (previously circulated)

The draft Audit Committee minutes were presented for information.

7.2 Link Governor updates (previously circulated)

The Safeguarding Link Governor visit report was noted. A feedback report was also received from a governor who attended the St Helens Governors' Forum as part of a separate governance role.

Resolved:

- **That all committee minutes and link governor reports be received and noted**

8. CONSENT AGENDA

It was noted that no questions had been raised in advance of the meeting with the Chair or Clerk regarding the papers listed under the consent agenda. The Chair

advised the Governing Body that there remained an opportunity to raise any queries if required. None were raised.

Policies and other documents (*previously circulated*)

- 8.1 **Strategies for Success Policy**
- 8.2 **Exclusion Policy**
- 8.3 **Safe Use of AI Policy**

Resolved:

- **That all policy documents be approved**

9. OTHER MATTERS

9.1 **Urgent business**

None

9.2 **Date of next meeting**

Tuesday 9 December 2025 at 6pm.

Governors were also reminded of Self-Assessment Review (SAR) panel dates previously circulated by the Clerk. Governors were invited to attend at least one panel meeting in the role of critical friend.

Following the Part 1 meeting, governors approved the Part 2 confidential minutes of the Full Governing Body meeting held on 1 July 2025 as a correct record and the Chair was authorised to sign them in accordance with Article 12 (3) of the Articles of Government.

There was no other Part 2 business to discuss and the meeting concluded at 7.30pm

Signed by the Chair: _____


On this day: _____ 9 December 2025 _____