



Minutes of the Full Governing Body Meeting held on Monday 9 December 2025 at 6pm in the College Conference Room

Present:	Patrick Alcantara	Foundation Governor
	Sarah Carroll	Foundation Governor
	Kevin Crooks	Staff Governor
	Paul Forester	Parent Governor
	Brother Ben	Foundation Governor
	Janet Gater	Principal
	Susan Jarvis	Co-opted Governor
	Andrew Jones	Co-opted Governor
	Darren Melling	Foundation Governor
	Samuel Moore	Student Governor
	Andrew Rannard	Foundation Governor
	Helen Stevenson (<i>Chair</i>)	Foundation Governor
	Amelia Southward	Co-opted Governor

In attendance: Nicola Tucker (*Murray Smith LLP*) – up to item 2.2 (*via Teams*)
Michelle Williams (*Vice Principal, Finance, Resources & Systems*)
Laura Forsyth (*Vice Principal, Curriculum, Quality & Pastoral*)
Peter Murphy (*Assistant Principal*)
Ruth Potter (*Clerk to Governors*)

PART 1

The Chair of Governors welcomed Paul Forester to his first meeting and invited the Assistant Principal to open the meeting in prayer and reflection.

1. ROUTINE AND STANDING ITEMS

1.1 Opening prayer and Catholic Life update (*previously circulated*)

The Assistant Principal opened the meeting with a reflection and invited governors to join him in prayer. He proceeded to present an overview of the activities supporting Catholic life across College. The Chair thanked the Assistant Principal for his update.

Resolved:

- **That the Catholic life update be received and noted.**

Peter Murphy 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. Paul Forester declared an interest in item 5.1. Brother Ben updated governors on his previously declared interests and confirmed that he was no longer a governor at Holy Cross Primary School.

1.3 **Apologies for absence**

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

- John Fogarty
- Mick Martin
- Graeme Slater

The meeting was declared quorate.

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

There were no items submitted for inclusion under urgent business.

1.5 **Minutes of the Governing Body meeting held on 6 October 2025** *(previously circulated)*

The minutes of the Full Governing Body (FGB) meeting held on 6 October 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)*

The Governing Body noted the action log prepared by the Clerk.

2. FINANCE, RISK & AUDIT

2.1 **Audit Completion Report** *(previously circulated)*

Nicola Tucker (Murray Smith LLP) presented the Audit Completion Report for the year ended 31 July 2025 and reported back on a smooth audit which had resulted in a clean, unqualified opinion on both regularity and financial statements. An overview of each section of the report was provided and key findings highlighted for governors.

It was noted that the Audit Completion Report had been scrutinised by the Audit Committee at its meeting on 18 November 2025 and had been recommended for approval to the full Governing Body.

The Chair thanked the External Auditor for her comprehensive report and invited any comments or questions. None were raised.

Resolved:

- **That the Audit Completion Report for the year ended 31 July 2025 be received and approved.**
- **That the letter of representation to Murray Smith LLP in connection with the financial statements for the year ended 31 July 2025 be approved and issued.**

ACTION – Chair to sign letter of representation on behalf of Governing Body

Nicola Tucker left the meeting at this point.

2.2 **Financial Statements for the year ended 31 July 2025** *(previously circulated)*

The Vice Principal (Finance, Resources & Systems) presented the College's financial statements for the year ended 31 July 2025 and referred governors to the key headline financial data.

It was reported that the financial statements had been scrutinised by the Finance and Resources Committee at its meeting on 20 November 2025. The Audit Committee had also considered the financial statements at its meeting on 18 November 2025

during which the External Auditor was present. The recommendation arising from this scrutiny was for the full Governing Body to approve the financial statements.

The Chair thanked the Vice Principal and wider Finance Team for their work throughout the year and invited any comments or questions.

Q – What had driven the increase in staff costs?

A – 5.5% pay award in 2024-25. Also, increased investment in staffing following on from higher student numbers.

Resolved:

- **That the Financial Statements for the year ended 31 July 2025 be approved.**
- **That the Financial Statements be signed by the Chair of Governors and College Accounting Officer prior to submission to the DfE and publication on the College website.**

ACTION – (a) Chair and Accounting Officer to sign financial statements upon receipt from External Auditor
(b) signed financial statements to be submitted to DfE by 31 December 2025
(c) signed financial statements to be published on College website by 31 January 2026

2.3 **Risk Register and Risk Management Action Plan** *(previously circulated)*

The Vice Principal (Finance, Resources & Systems) presented the College's updated Risk Register and associated action plan. It was reported that the Register had been considered in detail by the Audit Committee at its meeting on 18 November 2025 and had been recommended for approval. Significant and contingent risks were highlighted to governors and questions invited.

Resolved:

- **That the updated Risk Register and action plan be approved**

2.4 **National Pay Agreements** *(previously circulated)*

The Vice Principal updated members on the National Joint Council (NJC) pay agreements reached for teaching staff and support staff. Both agreements confirmed a 4% pay award, backdated to 1 September 2025, which was in line with the College's approved budget.

Resolved:

- **That the teaching staff and support staff pay awards be noted.**

3. **PRINCIPAL'S REPORTS**

3.1 **Principal's Termly Report** *(previously circulated)*

The Principal referred governors to her report and highlighted the Autumn Term KPI dashboard. Baseline KPI data for the 2024-25 academic year had been added and – where possible – an Autumn Term 2025-26 performance update had been included. It was explained that some KPI performance could only be reported at the end of the year. Discussion ensued on the dashboard report and the usefulness of this to the governors' strategic oversight function. It was agreed that, where possible, the inclusion of year-to-date comparative data for the previous academic year would be helpful. Governors were also referred to the in-year operating plan update report which highlighted progress to-date with in-year strategic priorities.

The Principal drew governors' attention to section 9 of her report, 'Future Look', and provided updates on:

- Level 3 vocational reform – new AAQs launched in September and embedded into the College curriculum. Plans for second wave of AAQs for September 2026, and impact of new V Levels on future College curriculum.
- Early Years T Level – marketing plan to secure viable level of enrolments for September 2026.
- Trade union workload negotiations – national discussions between the unions and the Sixth Form Colleges Association (SFCA).
- New Ofsted inspection framework – preparation activity including staff and governor training.

An update on academisation was provided under section 10 and the Principal confirmed that the Archdiocese of Liverpool's relaunched academisation strategy had been delayed and was now expected in the new year. In the meantime, the Principal updated governors on the indicative vision for academisation that had been shared by the Archdiocese at recent meetings. It was agreed that the Governing Body strategic planning day would be arranged to take place later in the Spring Term to facilitate detailed consideration of the relaunched academisation strategy.

Discussion ensued on possible multi-academy trust (MAT) funding models and some concerns were expressed on the potential impact on Carmel. The distinctive nature of a sixth form college – as opposed to a primary or secondary school – was highlighted and it was reported that the Principal was liaising with the only other Catholic sixth form college in the Archdiocesan area. It was noted that the College's outstanding loan remained a technical barrier to academisation.

The Governing Body was in agreement that the best interests of current and future students of Carmel College must be kept at the heart of any plans. It was agreed that the Chair and Principal would write to the Archdiocese in advance of the academisation strategy publication, highlighting governors' concerns.

Resolved:

- **That the Principal's Termly Report be received and noted.**
- **That the Principal and Chair be authorised to write to the Archdiocese of Liverpool on behalf of the Governing Body to highlight governors' views.**
- **That the Governing Body strategic planning day be deferred to March 2026 to take full account of the relaunched academisation strategy.**

**ACTION – (a) Principal and Chair to write to Archdiocese of Liverpool
(b) Governing Body strategic planning day to be arranged in March**

3.2 Higher Education (HE) Institutional Review *(previously circulated)*

The Vice Principal (Finance, Resources & Systems) reported back on the University of Liverpool's recent quinquennial review in relation to the College's provision of foundation year programmes. Verbal feedback was provided pending the written report. It was noted that the University wished to continue its franchise with the College.

The Chair thanked the Vice Principal for her update and invited governors' comments and questions.

Q – Would a potential conversion to academy status affect the College’s relationship with the University of Liverpool?

A – This would need to be explored further once academisation strategy was clearer.

Resolved:

- **That the verbal update on the HE institutional review be noted pending receipt of the written outcome.**

3.3 **Whole College Self-Assessment Report (SAR)** (*previously circulated*)

The Vice Principal (Curriculum, Quality & Pastoral) reported that the annual cycle of self-assessment reviews had been completed during the Autumn Term, culminating in the Whole College SAR validation panel that had taken place the previous day. The validation panel had consisted of four governors. Scrutiny and challenge during the meeting had resulted in some final amendments to the document.

The resultant Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) for 2025-26 was presented to governors highlighting the priorities for action to ensure continuous improvement over the coming year. Alongside specific subject areas identified for formal subject review (Religion, Ethics & Philosophy), other areas targeted for improvement included Foundation Learning and BTEC value-added scores. In addition, a number of more general, cross-College areas were identified for focus and development. The Vice Principal reported on all identified actions and confirmed that future progress reports against the QIP would be presented to governors through the Quality and Standards Committee.

Governors’ comments and questions were invited.

The Chair thanked all Senior Leadership Team (SLT) members and governors who had been involved in the SAR process since the beginning of November and, following final discussion, the Governing Body approved the College SAR and QIP 2025.

Resolved:

- **That the Whole College SAR and QIP 2025 be approved.**

4. **STUDENT VOICE AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT**

4.1 **Student Governor Report** (*previously circulated*)

The Student Governor referred governors to his written report and highlighted the following key points:

- Lower Sixth representatives elected to the Student Council
- Student Council lunchtime surgeries for students to discuss any arising issues
- Children in Need and other fundraising activities
- ‘Education for our generation’ event at St Helens Town Hall.

The Chair thanked the Student Governor for his report and invited governors’ comments and questions.

Q – With reference to the two issues highlighted by students during the lunchtime surgeries, what action can be taken to address these?

A – SLT members confirmed that consideration was being given to under-used areas across College to assess opportunities to create additional social spaces. The physical restrictions of the campus were highlighted. With regard to the rise in canteen prices, this issue had been raised with the external catering provider who

had confirmed that the increase had been necessary to cover the rise in food costs and the increase to the minimum wage.

Resolved:

- **That the Student Governor Report be received and noted.**

Paul Forester withdrew from the meeting at this point.

5. GOVERNANCE

5.1 Governance and membership update (previously circulated)

The Chair referred governors to the Clerk's report. Paul Forester's appointment as Parent Governor was confirmed for a term of four years, with assignment to the Audit Committee. Further to the discussion that had taken place at Search and Governance Committee, the Governing Body considered the reappointment of Mick Martin as Foundation Governor for a third term of office once his current term ended on 28 February 2026. Given the circumstances noted in the Committee minutes, all governors were in agreement that Mick Martin's reappointment as Foundation Governor should be recommended to the Archdiocese of Liverpool.

Resolved:

- **That Paul Forester be appointed as Parent Governor for a term of four years commencing on 9 December 2025 subject to satisfactory completion of final DBS checks.**
- **That Mick Martin's reappointment as Foundation Governor be recommended to the Archdiocese of Liverpool.**

**ACTION – (a) Clerk to arrange all standard checks, documentation and induction for newly appointed Parent Governor.
(b) Clerk to send Foundation Governor reappointment application to Archdiocese of Liverpool**

Paul Forester returned to the meeting at this point.

5.2 Governance SAR and QIP (previously circulated)

The Chair referred governors to the draft Governance SAR and QIP which had been considered by Search and Governance Committee on 20 October 2025 and recommended to the Governing Body for approval. The final progress update against the 2024-25 QIP was also presented for reference.

Resolved:

- **That the Governance SAR and QIP 2025-26 be approved.**

5.3 Policy Approval Schedule (previously circulated)

Further to the action taken at the previous meeting, the updated policy review schedule was presented with a triennial review cycle for the majority of policies. It was noted that SLT policy owners would be responsible for highlighting any changes in legislative or regulatory requirements that may necessitate an earlier review.

Resolved:

- **That the amended policy review schedule be approved.**

5.4 Election of Vice Chair of Governors (previously circulated)

The Chair confirmed that Mick Martin's term of office had recently come to an end and that nominations had been invited for the role from Foundation Governors. One

nomination had been received and accepted for Mick Martin. There were no other nominations. A vote took place with a unanimous outcome in favour of Mick Martin being re-appointed as the Vice Chair of the Governing Body.

Resolved:

- **That Mick Martin be appointed to serve as Vice Chair of the Governing Body for a period of two years from 9 December 2025 to 8 December 2027**

6. COMMITTEE AND LINK GOVERNOR REPORTS

- 6.1 **Search Committee draft minutes from 20 October 2025** *(previously circulated)*
- 6.2 **Audit Committee draft minutes from 18 November 2025** *(previously circulated)*
- 6.3 **Quality & Standards Committee draft notes from 18 November 2025** *(previously circulated)*
- 6.4 **Finance & Resources Committee draft minutes from 20 November 2025** *(previously circulated)*

6.5 Link Governor updates

The following link governor visit reports were noted:

- Catholic Ethos
- SEND
- EDI
- Careers, Skills & Digital

In addition, a report was provided on the recent student focus group attended by some governors at which there had been a useful discussion on a range of areas designed to give governors an insight into the lived student experience.

The Chair thanked all governors for their time spent visiting College outside normal meeting hours and invited any additional comments or questions.

Q – Safety of site entrance raised during student focus group visit; what action could be taken to address concerns?

A – Reference was made to efforts to lobby St Helens Council for a pedestrian crossing on Prescot Road, however due to the nature of the physical site the College had been informed that it was not legally possible to install a crossing. A reduced speed limit of 30mph was now in force on the section of road outside the College.

Resolved:

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

7. CONSENT AGENDA

It was noted that no questions had been raised in advance of the meeting with the 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)*

- 7.1 **Cyber Security Policy**
- 7.2 **Tendering & Procurement Policy**
- 7.3 **College Holiday Pattern 2026-27**
- 7.4 **Governance Meetings 2026-27**
- 7.5 **Health and Safety Annual Report**

7.6 Value for Money Annual Report

Resolved:

- That all policy documents be approved
- That all annual reports be received and noted

8. OTHER MATTERS

8.1 Urgent business

None

8.2 Date of next meeting

Full Governing Body – Tuesday 24 March 2026 at 6pm

Board away day would be scheduled later than usual in the Spring Term to allow governors time to discuss the Archdiocese of Liverpool's academisation strategy once this had been relaunched.

There being no further Part 1 business to discuss the meeting concluded at 7.10pm.

Signed by the Chair:  _____

On this day: _____ 24 March 2026 _____