AQUINAS COLLEGE

GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

Date: 20 January 2026
Time: 4.30pm
Venue: College

GOVERNORS PRESENT

Mrs H Dove, Mr G Hynes. Mr T McGee, Mrs T Ryan, Dr A Smith, Mr M Taylor and Mrs H Watts.

Mr G Hynes in the Chair

IN ATTENDANCE

Ms J Dommett	Principal	Mr A Bailey	Vice Principal

1. OPENING PRAYER/REFLECTION

The meeting began with a prayer led by Mr G Hynes.

2. WELCOME

The Chairperson welcomed Mrs Dove, Mrs Ryan and Mrs Watts to their first meeting of the committee.

3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received and accepted from Mr L Byrne. Governors noted that Mr Byrne was still in hospital and wished him all the best for a speedy recovery.

3. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Governors and Staff were asked to declare any interest, which they may have in any of the items on the Agenda for this meeting. Mrs Watts as Headteacher at New Mills High School declared an interest in item 8 Review of the College's Admission Policy.

4. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting held on 14 October 2025 copies of which had been circulated previously be approved and signed by the Chairperson as a correct record.

5. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

There were no matters arising that were not covered by the agenda for the meeting.

6. ACCESSIBILITY POLICY

Mr Bailey introduced the Accessibility Plan and Policy that had been circulated to Governors prior to the meeting.

He advised Governors that the college will provide reasonable adjustments in line with the 2010 Equality Act, subject to financial resources and practical considerations, to enable all students to participate fully in their education. The college is committed to making anticipatory adjustments prior to students beginning their studies at the college.

The document is live and amended throughout the year and updated on the website. The policy needs to be reviewed by the Governing Body on an annual basis. Mr Hynes asked how can Governors see evidence of progress being made. Mr Bailey replied that some items will stay on the plan whilst others will be removed once completed and new areas will be added. Ms Dommett advised Governors that at the point of review additions and deletions will be indicated.

Mr Bailey added that the review will start at the end of the summer term within the college with a view to it being completed by the start of the autumn term. It was also agreed that a summary of changes/updates would be provided for Governors.

Mr Bailey was thanked for the informative Accessibility Plan and Policy.

Mr Bailey left the meeting at this point.

7. ADMISSIONS 2026/2027

Ms Dommett updated Governors on the latest position regarding admissions for 2026/2027 and advised them that 3484 applications had been received for around 1400 places.

There had been an increase in the number of Category 1 applications from feeder schools, plus category 1.D (siblings), more interviews had been undertaken over the telephone by senior and middle leadership members of staff. The interview is to give students advice about entry requirements and courses available at the college. The number of applications was similar to last year.

Ms Dommett advised Governors that a moderation process is then undertaken before the formal offers are made by February half term. A conversion rate of around 60% is then applied to determine how many places to offer to meet the college's target number. The college SLT review the admission arrangements each year. The plan is to grow by around 40 students but judging how many offers to make to achieve this increase is more tricky this year due to a drop in the conversion rate last year.

An update on the admission numbers will be given at the Governing Body meeting on 17 March 2026.

8. ADMISSIONS POLICY REVIEW

Ms Dommett advised Governors that following the Governing Body meeting in the Autumn Term she had revised the draft Admissions Policy. The revised Admissions Policy had been circulated to Governors prior to the meeting.

The main changes had been made to the inclusion of a waiting list and an appeals process. Whilst it is not a legal requirement to have an appeals process it is considered good practice. It was noted that other sixth form colleges in the area have an appeals process. Any changes will need to go out to consultation by the end of January 2026. The policy would be implemented for the 2027/2028 academic year.

Ms Dommett informed Governors that 89 appeals had been received following the telephone interviews where a place has not been offered. Mr Taylor asked if the number was similar to previous years. Ms Dommett said that she did not know but would find out and report back to Governors. Mrs Watts asked if a student is refused on appeal can they go on the waiting list. Ms Dommett replied that they can go on the waiting list. Mr Hynes asked what are the reasons given for an appeal. Ms Dommett replied that they include that the students have good grades, good attendance and not had any help in completing the application form. She added that there has been an increase in AI being used to help with the completion of the application form.

Dr Smith suggested that where the feeder schools are listed it should be made clear that they are schools within Stockport. A discussion took place on paragraph 3.2 concerning overseas students. It was confirm that it was a requirement made by the central government.

RESOLVED: i)That the amended Admissions Policy be agreed and the a copy be sent to all Governors for information and ii) That the policy go out to consultation before the end of January 2026.

9. STUDENT DESTINATIONS

Ms Dommett introduced a paper that had been circulated to Governors which showed the destination of students who had left the college at the end of the 2024/2025 academic year. The information had been taken from the DfE Dashboard and Nick Allen's Sixth Sense Destinations Report – Overview of A level subjects.

Governors' noted the following:

a) Students had accepted places at 71 universities with 30 Russell Group and Sutton Trust Universities.

b) This number had increased and was 4% above the national average.

c) The information provided was broken down by categories and was shown as comparison against the 2024 figures. It did not include vocational courses (40).

d) The number of students accepting places at the Russell Group of Universities was 244 an increase of 60 students.

e) Oxford and Cambridge places – 3 students.

f) 7 students undertook medic and veterinary courses.

g) Universities in northern cities continue to be the most popular with Aquinas students. Once again Manchester Metropolitan University is again the most popular university with 115 students progressing onto a higher education degree course. Other popular universities were University of Salford 69, Sheffield Hallam 47, University of Liverpool 45, Liverpool John Moores University 48, University of Sheffield 44, University of Manchester 37, Leeds Beckett University 26, Nottingham Trent University 16. Dr Smith added that the trend now is for students to go to local universities.

h) Students from the college went onto 71 institutions compared to 77 in the previous year.

i) The totals for the badged students was i) Bursary 62% (54%), ii) Free College Meals 50% (46%), iii) Pupil Premium 50% (48%), iv) Widening Participation 525 (48%).

j) Governors noted that 12 students started degree apprenticeship and 3 higher apprenticeship and 1 advances apprenticeship.

k) 75% of High Needs students in the main college went into Further Education, Employment and Training. This was broken down to i) 5 at university, ii) 2 in employment, iii) 1 in apprenticeship, iv) 4 in FE and v) 4 with no current destination.

l) Out of the 16 students in the Pathway Department i) 3 had 3rd year at the college, ii) 8 had an FE placement, iii) 3 supported internship and iv) 2 employment

Ms Dommett advised Governors that there are currently 65 students who are on an Oxbridge programme within the college.

Ms Dommett was thanked for her informative report.

RESOLVED: That the Student Destination Overview for 2025 be noted.

10. PUBLICITY

Ms Dommett advised Governors of the following:

a) The college continues have a page in the Stockport Post newspaper.

b) The college has joined a marketing network with other colleges

c) The college continues to work on its social media presence.

Mrs Watts advised Governors that New Mills High School had been contacted by the PE department from the college to work with Yr 10 students at the school.

11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no Any Other Business,

12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting is 23 June 2026 at 4.30pm.

Signed _____ Date _____

Chairperson