AQUINAS COLLEGE
GENERAL PURPOSE COMMITTEE

Date: 24 June 2025
Time: 4.30pm
Venue: College

GOVERNORS PRESENT

Mr L Byrne, Mr G Hynes, Mr T McGee, Mrs J Miller and Dr A Smith.

Mr G Hynes in the Chair

IN ATTENDANCE

Mr D Pearson Principal

Mr A Bailey Vice Principal

1. OPENING PRAYER

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

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received and accepted from Mr M Taylor.

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. No interests were declared.

4. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting held on 21 January 2025 were agreed 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. ADMISSIONS 2025/2026

Mr Pearson advised Governors that the current position in relation to student numbers for September 2025 was as follows:

	Category 1	**Category 2**	**Total**
Number of offers made	1102	1125	2227
Accepted	647	716	1363
Undecided	102	160	262
Withdrawn	54	34	88
No response received (Remain as open offers)	299	215	514

The number of students who had accepted invitations to the Taster Days on 7 and 8 July 2025 was 1349.

The projection is for between 1330 and 1350 students in L6. The U6 could be around 1220 students. This would give a total of between 2550 and 2570 students excluding Pathway students (30/32), which is where the college wants to be. The funding for the year will be based on 2535 students.

Mr Pearson advised Governors that he would explain the process to the new Principal so that she was fully informed on how the college makes its offer to students.

Mr Pearson advised Governors that the total number at the start of the academic year could be around 2610 giving a total of 2560 students by the census date in October 2025, which gives the college some modest growth. The actual conversion rates are unknown and there could be some fluctuation. Mr Pearson reminded Governors that the number of students on roll on the census date determines the funding for the college for the next financial year.

Many of those students who are shown as undecided did put the college down as their first choice.

Mr Pearson added that there were no major concerns and the college was on track to achieve the numbers outlined above.

A discussion took place on the numbers of students who have an ECHP. Mr Pearson advised Governors that he would like to streamline the process to remove the uncertainty about a student's needs. Mr McGee felt it was getting harder to obtain the details of students' needs, made more difficult as they come from across 9 local authorities. Mr Pearson added that how to manage SEND students is a major problem within education but the college aims to manage it effectively. Mr Hynes asked how do you solve the problem. Mr Pearson replied that EHCPs could be replaced with something new that has a higher threshold. The funding for SEND students in post 16 is based on the flat rate applied to all students, plus a second statutory element of £6,000 for SEND and addition claims can be made for further essential costs.

Dr Smith added that parents of students who do not have an EHCP are aware that they can go to a tribunal for the decision of the local authority to be overturned.

RESOLVED: That the above strategies be noted.

7. ANALYSIS OF STUDENT WITHDRAWALS

Mr Bailey made a presentation to Governors that outlined the various reasons why students leave the college before completing their course of study. The number of leavers was 98 compared to 75 in the previous year. Very few students leave after the retention deadline. Students leave for a variety of reasons including mental health, behaviour, students on the wrong course and seeking employment. Lower prior attainment before coming to the college is one of the main issues.

The college retention rate is good at 91.4% compared to 89.9% in the previous year. Governors noted that within ill health the main reason was mental health. Governors noted that a student could be at the college for an additional year due to illness. Mr Smith sought clarification on funding for those students who did a third year. Mr Pearson replied that if it is the same course there is no funding but if it is a new course funding is provided at a reduced rate.

Mr Bailey advised Governors that the college is good at finding suitable courses for students. A discussion took place on students who have a supported study programme. If they reduce to two A levels they can still obtain a place on a Foundation Degree course. Mr Bailey added it is rare for a student to complete an A level in one year. For those students on the list where there is a problem with attendance or behaviour, which is around 15 students, they may be better off finding an alternative destination.

Mr McGee asked would those students with mental health issues be offered a re-start on a new course. Mr Bailey replied that those students designated as a returner would have their options evaluated by a senior tutor. He added that the college has a caring approach.

Mrs Miller asked if there was a legacy from the Covid years. Mr Bailey replied that the college receives a number of requests from students to do their studying remotely. The college offers different levels of support to students but it feels that to agree to remote learning is not in the best interests of the students who need to meet other students. Dr Smith added that recent research had highlighted many issues as a result of social media including mental health problems.

8. ACCOUNTABILITY STATEMENT

Mr Bailey advised Governors that the main purpose of the Accountability Statement had been highlighted at the recent training session. He drew Governors attention to the changes.

The Accountability Agreement is a formal document outlining the college's strategic objectives aligning with national priorities and local need. Its purpose is to ensure transparency, accountability and continuous improvement in educational outcomes.

The Governing Body has to review and endorse the Accountability Agreement, has to monitor implementation and progress and provide strategic guidance and support continuous improvement. The Accountability Agreement has to be updated and approved by the Governing Body and sent to the DfE by the 30 June 2025.

The Accountability Agreement is part of the Stockport Local Skills Improvement Plan and the Greater Manchester Local Skills Improvement Plan. It identifies the skills shortage in Stockport and the colleges response to these shortages.

Mr Bailey advised Governors that he would upload the Accountability Statement to the Governors portal.

RESOLVED: That the amended Accountability Statement be approved.

9. PUBLICITY

Mr Pearson advised Governors that the website continues to be used well, analytics show that visitors over the last months have spent the longest on the entry requirement pages.

The College now maintains a Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok account with good engagement across all 3 platforms.

Nothing new with regards merchandise used at events. The liaison team needs a rethink, the core issue here is the liaison team's staffing levels, which are currently insufficient to cover the number of events. Mr Bailey added that the demands placed on the college by schools is unrealistic in terms of staff time and resources.

8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

a) Mr Pearson advised Governors that an invitation to the opening of the new build would be sent to them.

b) There would a celebration in college on the last day of term 15 July 2025 from 12.00 to 2.00pm to which governors were invited.

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

14 October 2025 at 4.30pm

Signed _____ Date _____

Chairperson