AQUINAS COLLEGE GOVERNING BODY

Meeting: 7 July 2026
Time: 4.30pm
Venue: College

GOVERNORS PRESENT

Ms E Bradbury, Ms J Dommett, Ms H Donelon, Mrs C H Dove, Mr B Hickey, Mrs C Houghton, Mr G Hynes, Mr A Kazimi, Mr A Martin, Mr T P McGee, Mr J O'Sullivan, Ms J Paton, Mrs T Ryan, Dr A Smith, Mr M Taylor and Mrs H Watts.

IN ATTENDANCE

Mr A Bailey	Vice Principal
Mrs D Blackburn	Assistant Principal (Finance)
Ms C Phillips	Assistant Principal – Curriculum & Quality
Mr T Conlon	Clerk to the Governing Body
Mrs L Luddington	Prospective Foundation Governor

Mr T P McGee in the Chair.

1. OPENING PRAYER

The meeting began with a moment of reflection led by Mr McGee.

2. INTRODUCTION

The Chairperson advised Governors that Mrs L Luddington was attending the meeting with a view to becoming a Foundation Governor. For the benefit of Mrs Luddington everyone introduced themselves.

3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Mr L Byrne, Miss S Yates and from Ms H Donelon for her late arrival.

4. 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.

5. (i) GOVERNING BODY MINUTES

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the meetings held on 17 March 2026 and 6 May 2026, copies of which had been circulated previously, (a) be approved and signed by the Chairperson as a correct record and (b) be authorised for publication in accordance with the College Instrument and Articles.

6. (ii) MATTERS ARISING FROM THE GOVERNING BODY MINUTES

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

Ms H Donelon arrived at this point in the meeting.

7. (i) COMMITTEE MINUTES

RESOLVED – That the minutes of the following Committee meetings, copies circulated previously,

(i) Audit Committee	8 June 2026
(ii) Resources Committee	2 June 2026
(iii) Teaching and Learning Committee	9 June 2026
(iv) General Purposes and Employment Committees	23 June 2026

(a) be approved and signed by the Chairperson as a correct record and (b) be authorised for publication in accordance with the College Instrument and Articles.

8. (ii) MATTERS ARISING FROM THE COMMITTEE MINUTES

a) Audit Committee – 8 June 2026

i) Audit Review – Minute 7

Ms Dommett had attended the meeting to receive feedback from the auditors on the college's performance. Both internal and external auditors had reported that they have a good dialogue over the planning and timing of the audits. They added that there was a good working relationship with the college.

ii) Internal Audit Reports – Minute 8

All the Internal Audit Reports had received strong assurance.

iii) Internal Audit Plan 2025/2026 – Minute 11

RESOLVED: i) That Wgb be appointed as Internal Auditors for 2026/2027, ii) The Internal Audit Plan of 20 days be agreed and iii) That the fees for 2026/2027 which are exclusive of VAT and expenses be agreed at £9,300.

iv) Policy Review – Minute 14

RESOLVED: That the amended policies for a) Anti Bribery, b) Critical Incidents, c) Fraud and Corruption, d) Hospitality and Gifts and e) Risk Management be approved.

v) Risk Register New Model – Minute 16

Following a recommendation from the Internal Auditor's the new format would include an inherent risk and a residual risk. The inclusion of an inherent risk was new. A full risk register would be present to the next meeting of the Audit Committee.

b) Resources Committee – 2 June 2026

i) Charging Policy for Adult and Continuing Education Courses – Minute 4

RESOLVED: That the recommendation made by the Resources Committee in relation to the fees to be charged for Adult and Continuing Education Courses for 2026/2027 be approved.

ii) Health and Safety Report – Minute 7

Governors noted the Health and Safety report for the period 1 August 2025 to 14 May 2026.

iii) iv) Policy Review – Minute 14

RESOLVED: That the amended Financial Regulations be approved.

iv) The budget for 2026/2027 and Authorisation of Two Year Financial Plan are separate items on the agenda.

v) Pay Awards – A 5% increase had been included in staffing budgets. Mr McGee advised Governors that the SFCA will discuss with the unions their pay award claim once the schoolteachers pay award has been agreed.

c) Teaching and Learning Committee – 9 June 2026

i) In Year Progress – Quality Review Minute 6

Dr Smith advised Governors that the role of the committee was to look at a) the quality assurance of teaching and learning, b) performance data and c) improving targets and monitoring the progress of students. The last meeting of the committee had focussed on quality review and the in year progress made by subject areas. Particular reference was made to the excellent results for students re-taking their English and Maths GCSE.

ii) Curriculum Issues – Minute 7

Governors noted that the Government had delayed the proposed changes to the Curriculum for a year but the first tranche of V levels will now be taught from September 2027.

The DfE required all post 16 providers to provide a "Strategic Transition Planning Statement by mid June 2026. The college's response was informed by the Implementation Plan published in June 2026 and the consultation on core content 2027 V Levels. In October 2026 the college will be required to confirm if it is on track to deliver the plan submitted in June 2026. For each year up to and including 2030 the college will need to provide a strategic transition plan ahead of the start of the academic year, confirming it is on track. The college had responded to the consultation process.

It is still unclear about what is happening to Criminology but it will not be defunded for 2026/2027. Digital information will replace IT and the college will look at alternative courses to offer from the start of the 2027/2028 academic year, including an accountancy and finance qualification. Heads of Departments had submitted comments on the content of these courses.

iii) Committee Terms of Reference – Minute 8

Resolved: That the amended Teaching and Learning Committee Terms of Reference be approved.

d) General Purposes and Employment Committees - 23 June 2026

i) Admissions 2026/2027 – Minute 6

More offers have been made for September 2026 and that the retention in L6 is better than usual. The current position in relation to student numbers for September 2026 is that 814 students have accepted invitations to the Taster Day on 6 July 2026 and a further 695 for 7 July 2026 which is higher than last year. The actual conversion rates are unknown and there could be some fluctuation.

Many of those students who are shown as undecided did put the college down as their first choice. There were no major concerns and the college was on track to achieve the numbers outlined above.

ii) Student Withdrawals – Minute 7

Governors noted that the number of leavers was 97 compared to 98 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.

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.

iii) Accountability Statement -Minute 8

The Accountability Statement is separate items on the agenda.

iv) Student Voice – Minute 9

Governors noted the positive comments that students had given about college.

v) Policy Review – Minute 11

RESOLVED: That the amended policies for a) Data Protection, b) Freedom of Information c) Grievance, d) Safer Recruitment and DBS, e) Whistleblowing Policy, f) Capability, g) Disciplinary Policy Staff, h) Sickness Absence i) Respecting Each Other (Bullying and Harassment) and j) Equality, Diversity and Inclusion be approved.

9. BUDGET 2026/2027

Mrs Blackburn gave Governors an overview of the budget that had been presented to the Resources Committee at its meeting on 2 June 2026. Additional information had been received from the DfE and this had now been included in further budget papers.

Mrs Blackburn circulated a paper that outlined the effect of the late changes announced by the DfE to the college's budget for 2026/2027.

Prior to the late announcement from the DfE they had issued income for 2026/2027 of £14,843,665 compared to £14,301,854 for 2025/2026 an increase of £541,811. That funding is based on 2,558 students compared with 2,540 for last year an increase of 18 students.

An inflationary increase of 0.55% has been applied to all funding bands, now giving a top rate of £5,133 compared with £5,105 for 2025/2026. 98.50 % of students at the college are at the top rate of £5,133. The DfE have now announced that there will be an increase in the 16-18 funding rates and the disadvantage funding. The initial DfE funding above contains £372,000 for 62 High Needs students; this element of funding provides the first £6,000 additional support funding per High Needs students who need one to one support. It is not yet known how many High Needs students will join the college in September 2026. The total income for the 2026/2027 financial year is £17,690,357 compared to £16,927,427 last year an increase of £762,930.

The college has still to evaluate the cost of new High Needs students to the Local Authority. This covers the assessment of the additional costs over £6,000 which should be funded by the Local Authorities.

As part of the late announcement from the DfE, there will be some support for the pay award increases in 2026/27. This should apply to colleges as well as schools. No account has been taken of this as the details need to be worked through.

The Teacher's Pension Grant within the budget should have continued until 31 July 2027 and is currently confirmed at £ 762,000. Following the revaluation of the Teacher's pension scheme, the DfE have confirmed that the employer's rate will fall from 28.68% to 17.68%. Whilst this appears to be a large drop in costs, the DfE are going to reduce the Teachers Pension Grant significantly and almost to nothing, so this reduction should have a nil effect on the surplus for the year.

The college will receive a Teachers National Insurance Grant of £206,037 for 2026/2027 compared to £202,000 for 2025/2026. The amount received in September 2026 covers the period April 2026 to March 2027 which cuts across two financial years for the college. Murray Smith (External Auditors) have suggested that it all be included in the 2026/2027 financial year because it would not be regarded as material to the 2025/2026 accounts.

The draft budget shows a contingency reserve of £235,521 compared to £252,308 last year, a decrease of £16,787, whilst the initial trading surplus is £75,000 (See minute 8).

All aspects of staffing and non pay costs will be monitored to ensure the running of the college as efficiently as possible. A 5% increase had been included in the staffing budget with various inflationary increase for non pay costs.

Mrs Blackburn drew Governor's attention to the Financial Health calculated from the initial budget where the overall outcome is that it is classed as Good at 200 within the range 180 to 230.

RESOLVED: That the budget for 2026/2027 be approved.

10. TWO YEAR DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Mrs Blackburn circulated to Governors an Overview of the two year financial plan. She advised Governors that the two year financial plan has to be submitted to the DfE by the end of July 2026. The plan includes the outturn for 2025/2026, the budget for 2026/2027 and the forecast of 2027/2028.

The paper showed the high level assumptions that are proposed to be included in the two year financial plan. The suggestion is that the college submits the budget as agreed above as the late changes announced by the DfE have not been confirmed in enough detail to change the budget.

Mrs Blackburn pointed out that the college has put a Teacher Pay Award of 5% in the budget, which is greater than the amount that will be awarded. As using that figure creates a surplus of £75000, which results in a score of below 1 (0.75) for that element of the financial health calculation, the formula used to calculate financial health automatically defaults to requires improvement. Were the college to amend the Teacher Pay Award to 4.5%, which felt to still be higher than the actual negotiated pay away, the revised budged would show a change from a surplus of £75,000 to £120000. This would then gain a score of '1' and, as a result, the college's financial health for the three years will be outstanding, good and good. Governors were asked to approve this change?

Ms Dommett advised Governors that the college was in a good financial position. An update will be provided for Governors at the Autumn Term meeting.

RESOLVED: i) That the budget surplus be increased from £75,000 to £120,000. ii) That the Chairperson be authorised to sign the Two Year Plan on behalf of the Governing Body.

11 (i) PRINCIPAL'S TERMLY REPORT

The report of the Principal, copies of which were circulated, was presented and discussed. The report was supplemented with an additional booklet "A Celebration of Catholic Life at Aquinas – Summer Term 2025/2026" which illustrates the opportunities provided and achievements of both staff and students.

RESOLVED - That the Principal's report be received.

12. (ii) MATTERS ARISING FROM THE PRINCIPAL'S TERMLY REPORT

Ms Dommett advised Governors that the report would focus on the key issues facing the college. The main areas covered in the report were a) Introduction b) Chaplaincy and Core RE and RS, c) Safeguarding d) Results Overview, e) Admissions and Student Recruitment, f) Finance, g) Human Resource, h) Adult Education and i) careers.

a) Introduction – Ms Dommett advised Governors that there had been unprecedented level of change during the year with more still to come. The college has submitted its Strategic Transition Planning Statement to the DfE, setting out the college's intention to transition to V levels from September 2027. The SEND White Papers, Every Child Achieving and Thriving means that the provision for students with additional needs will begin to change. The college will be inspected under the new Ofsted framework sometime from September 2026 onwards. Despite all of this predictions and quality process demonstrate that students continue to succeed and thrive at the college. Retention has increased, attendance has also improved and the predictions are on course for students to achieve results in line the positive results of last year.

b) Chaplaincy – The report covered the spiritual activities, communal prayer and liturgical milestones that have enriched the college. It also referred at the trip to Lourdes with Xaverian College. The booklet "A Celebration of Catholic Life at Aquinas – Summer Term 2025/2026" provided further details.

c) Safeguarding and SEND– The format in which data is presented to Governors has changed. Information was provided on College attendance for 2024/2025 (93%) and 2025/2026 (90%). The figures for 2025/2026 include more sessions (stretch and support), in addition longer absences are not authorised in the same way. Student could potentially have 4 more additional attendance marks. The figures looked at the college as a whole and different learner groups including economic disadvantaged, free college meals and bursary. A summary of the safeguarding incidents for the period 13 April to 29 June 2026 was provided for Governors. The information classed as Sensitive Information is only held by the Designated Safeguarding Lead and the safeguarding team.

d) Results Overview – The predicted grades for 2026 A level and Criminology examination results are in line with 2025 outcomes. Predictions in 2025 were 2% higher for A*.B at 62% than results at 59%. For Vocational courses there has been an improvement in retention which has led to an increase in the prediction for achievement. The mock results for the L6 show an improvement on last year at the higher grade points and are in line with ALPS progress, which suggests a strong year group.

e) Admissions and Student Recruitment – The overall number of applications on time was 3026, with a further 322 late applications compared with 2881 and 315 for last year. A breakdown on the applications received, interviews and offers was given for categories 1 and 2. More offers have been made which should lead to an increase in 50 students. Over 1350 students attended the Taster Days, reflecting a strong interest and early commitment. There may well be some students who do not take up the offer of a place, in that case it may be necessary to go to the waiting list.

f) Finance - This had been dealt with under the budget for 2026/2027.

g) Human Resources – Ms Dommett reported on the resignations and appointments that had been made to the college and thanked all staff for their commitment, diligence and hard work. Particular reference was made to the Support Staff Review on pay, role and staff welfare.

h) Adult Education – The report covered academic and leisure courses that had been run at the college during the 2025/2026 academic year. It also looked at the courses that were planned for the 2026/2027 academic year. It was noted that all students on the AAT courses had all passed.

i) Careers – A series of careers events had been held during the summer term, including one to one career meetings and After Aquinas event, held in March 2026 and a Skills and Careers Day in June 2026. Feedback from students, parents, carers and organisations was included in the report. Details were given concerning the intended destinations of student from both U6 and L6, along with the Gatsby Benchmarks and student careers meetings with an Aquinas Careers Adviser.

13. ACCOUNTABILITY STATEMENT

Mr Bailey circulated a copy of the college's Accountability Statement which had been updated and had to be sent to the DfE by the 31 July 2026, it will also be on the Governors portal. The document is more concise than in previous years.

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. Adult Education is included in the Strategic Plan and it shows how the college links in with the Stockport Plan.

Governors were asked to let Mr Bailey have any comments as soon as possible so that they can be incorporated into the Accountability Statement before it is sent to the DfE.

It was agreed that an item be placed on the agenda for the next General Purposes Committee meeting.

The Chairperson advised Governors that Mrs Dove, Mr Hynes, Ms Paton and himself had agreed to attend the next induction training on safeguarding for new staff.

14. GOVERNING BODY MEMBERSHIP

The Chairperson referred to an email that he had sent to all Foundation Governors asking if they knew of anyone who might be interested in becoming a Foundation Governor at the college. He advised Governors that Mr M Taylor had decided that due to work commitments he would not be seeking re-appointment as a Foundation Governor. Vacancies exist for two Foundation Governors and one Co-opted Governor. The Chairperson added that Mrs Liz Luddington had attended the Governing Body meeting with a view to becoming a Foundation Governor.

15. COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP 2026/2027

i) Governors were asked to consider which Committees they would be interested in being members of for 2026/2027. A copy of the Committee Membership for 2025/2026 had been circulated for information. The only changes were that Mr J O'Sullivan becomes a member of the Audit Committee, General Purposes and Employment Committees. He will cease to be a member of the Resources Committee.

ii) The following Chair and Vice Chairs were agreed

AUDIT

Mr J O'Sullivan (Chair)

Mrs T Ryan (Vice Chair)

REMUNERATION

Mrs C H Dove (Chair)

Mr B Hickey (Vice Chair)

RESOURCES

Mr T McGee (Chair)

Mr B Hickey (Vice Chair)

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Dr A Smith(Chair)

Ms H Donelon (Vice Chair)

GENERAL PURPOSES

Mr G Hynes (Chair)

EMPLOYMENT

Mr G Hynes (Chair)

Mrs H Watts (Vice Chair) Mrs H Watts ((Vice Chair)

iii) That Mr J O'Sullivan be appointed as the Health and Safety Governor.

iv) That Mrs C H Dove be appointed as the SEND Governor.

v) That Mrs C H Dove be appointed as the Safeguarding Governor

vi) That Ms J Paton be appointed as the Governor representative on the JCC

vii) That Mr B Hickey be appointed as the Governor representative on the Mission Group

viii) That Mr G Hynes be appointed to serve on the Careers Group

ix) That Mr G Hynes be appointed as a Governor responsible for Personal Development.

16. CALENDAR OF MEETINGS 2025/2026

A schedule of meetings for the Academic Year 2026/2027 had been circulated to all Governors for information.

RESOLVED: That the schedule of meetings for the Academic Year 2026/2027 as circulated be approved. In addition an Extraordinary General Meeting would be held on 22 September 2026 to update Governors on the college's preparation for an Ofsted Inspection.

17. CHAIRPERSON'S ACTION

The Chairperson advised Governors that there had been no action since the last meeting.

18. CORRESPONDENCE

No correspondence was brought forward for Governor's consideration.

19. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chairperson referred to the following:

i) Ms Dommett has been in post for a year as Principal and that he had held a review meeting with her. It had been agreed that there has been of lot of change during the year with many new things coming on stream. Ms Domment commented that it been a learning experience and that Governors and staff had been welcoming and supportive and that it had been a challenging but enjoyable year.

ii) That this would be Michael Taylor's last meeting, he had decided not to seek re-appointment as a Foundation Governor after 8 years due to work commitments. On behalf of the Governing Body the Chairperson thanked Mr Taylor for his contribution and support that he had given to the college and wished him well for the future. Mr Taylor responded by saying that he had enjoyed his time on the Governing Body and was sure that the college will go from strength to strength in the future.

iii) That Emma Bradbury was getting married in a couple of weeks and would be known as Mrs Bradbury. He congratulated her and wished her well for the future.

iv) The Chairperson thanked everyone for attending the meeting and for their support and commitment to the college and hoped that they would enjoy the summer break.

20. NEXT MEETINGS

The next meetings would be as follows:

a) Extraordinary General Meeting on 22 September 2026 at 4.30pm

b) 24 November 2026 at 4.30pm.

Signed _____ Date _____

Chairperson