AQUINAS COLLEGE GOVERNING BODY

Meeting: 17 March 2026
Time: 4.30pm
Venue: College

GOVERNORS PRESENT

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

IN ATTENDANCE

Mr A Bailey	Vice Principal
Mrs D Blackburn	Assistant Principal (Finance)
Ms C Phillips	Assistant Principal (Curriculum and Quality)
Mr T Conlon	Clerk to the Governing Body

Mr T P McGee in the Chair.

1. OPENING PRAYER/REFLECTION

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

2. INTRODUCTIONS

For the benefit of the Student Governors everyone was asked to introduce themselves.

3. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Mr L Byrne, Ms H Donelon and Ms J Paton.

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. Mrs Watts as Headteacher at New Mills High School declared an interest in item 12 a Review of the College's Admission Policy.

5. STUDENT GOVERNORS

It was noted that Mr A Kazmi, and Miss S Yates had been elected as Student Governors. The Chairperson advised Governors that Mr A Kazmi would be a member of the Resources Committee and Miss S Yates would be a member of the Teaching and Learning Committee. They had both attended recent committee meetings.

6. CHAIRPERSON'S ACTION

The Chairperson advised Governors that he had undertook the following action since the last meeting.

a) Appointment of Mrs T Ryan to the Audit Committee until the end of the academic year. b) Appointment of Mrs H Dove and Mrs T Ryan to the General Purposes and Employment Committees until the end of the academic year.

c) Appointment of Mr T P McGee to the Remuneration Committee for the meeting on 10 February 2026.

All the appointments were to ensure that the Committees were quorate.

7. (i) GOVERNING BODY MINUTES

RESOLVED – i) That the minutes of the meetings held on 25 November 2025 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.

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

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

8. (i) COMMITTEE MINUTES

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

(i) Audit Committee	9 February 2026
(ii) Resources Committee	10 February 2026
(iii) General Purposes and Employment Committee	20 January 2026
(iv) Teaching and Learning Committee	3 February 2026
(v) Remuneration Committee	10 February 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 – 9 February 2026

i) Internal Audit Reports – Minute 7

Mr Martin advised Governors that Wylie and Bissett had completed their first two pieces of work a) Risk Management (Substantial Assurance) and b) Payroll (Strong Assurance)

ii) Mr O'Sullivan asked if cyber security was covered on the risk register. Mrs Blackburn replied that it is included and has its own notes of action. Mr McGee added that the college is upgrading its IT equipment. Mr Hynes asked if viral infections were also coved by the risk register. Mrs Blackburn advised Governors that the risk register identifies high level risks but the college does have a notifiable deceases policy.

b) Resources Committee – 10 February 2026

i) Budget Update – Minute 8

The Governors noted the budget had been re-forecasted at the end of January 2026 and that the budget is running as expected and the projected outturn was quite positive.

ii) Future Funding Methodology – Minute 9

Governors noted that there were no changes to the funding methodology for 2025/2026. Details of the college funding for 2026/2027 should be known later this month. It is anticipated that the funding will increase by about £500,000 due to a growth in student numbers. Student numbers are based on the October 2025 census date. Government priorities for funding will also be announced.

iii) Committee Terms of Reference – Minute 10

Mr McGee drew Governors attention to the amount of spending that is delegated for any items that arise in the year that has not already been agreed in the college budget that has been approved by Governors.

iv) Martyn's law – Minute 11 (b)

Governors noted that the college already has lockdown procedures in place along with the risk register and business continuity plan. The college has undertaken lockdown exercises annually for a number of years but have only involved staff to make sure they are secure in the processes. It is intended to carry out an exercise this year to include both staff and students after the exams have finished.

v) Lansdowne House – Confidential Item

Governors noted the college's position with regard to Lansdowne House.

c) General Purposes Committee and Employment Committees – 20 January 2026

i) Accessibility Plan and Policy – Minute 6

Governors noted that the Accessibility Plan and Policy would be considered at this meeting.

ii) Admissions 2026/2027 - Minute 7

Mr Taylor asked if the college was still receiving applications. Ms Dommett replied that very few applications were being received at this stage in the process.

iii) Admissions Policy Review

Governors noted that the revised Admissions Policy would be considered at this meeting.

iv) Student Destinations – Minute 8

The Governing Body noted the information on the destination of students who had left the College at the end of the 2024/2025 academic year. It was noted that there had been an increase in the number of students who are choosing to study locally. In addition Governors noted the increase in the number of students accepting places at the Russell Group of Universities, along with the number of High Needs students going into Further Education, Employment and Training.

d) Teaching and Learning Committee – 3 February 2026

Dr Smith advised governors that committee had received detailed reports on a) The new Ofsted framework b) Leadership and Management SAR and Quality Review meetings, c) Updated In Year Progress, d) Curriculum Issues.

Governors noted that there was an agenda item for this meeting which would update Governors on the new Ofsted framework.

e) Remuneration Committee – 10 February 2026

i) Senior Leadership Development – Minute 7

Governors noted the revised senior management structure at the college that would be implemented from 1 September 2026. Ms Dommett advised Governors that the college had made an appointment for the new post of Assistant Principal (Inclusion and Opportunity). It was an external appointment, and she would start on 1 September 2026.

ii) Senior Postholders Remuneration – Minute 8

The Committee noted that the pay award for teachers had been 4.0% payable from 1 September 2025.

The Committee had recorded their thanks and appreciation to all the college staff for their hard work and commitment to the college.

RESOLVED: That the recommendation made by the Remuneration Committee in relation to the pay of the Vice Principal be approved.

9. BUDGET 2025/2026 HALF YEAR FORECAST

Mrs Blackburn advised Governors that the budget had been re-forecast at the end of January 2026 and she circulated a paper that updated the budget position since the Resources Committee meeting on 10 February 2026. The main points to note are as follows;

i) The staffing budgets had been re-forecast and the teaching staff budget had been reduced by £60,000 and the support staff budget by £45,000.

ii) The non pay budget has been increased by £10,000

iii) The teaching support service IT forecast has increased by £61,000 and the admin budget reduced by the same amount to better reflect the IT spend as most of it is curriculum.

iv) The high needs budget income has been increased from £350,000 to £450,000.

v) GMCA grant income has increased from £63,428 to £90,000 following a successful business case.

vi) Bank interest has increased from £200,000 to £220,000.

vii) There has been an increase in the cost of language assistants and invigilators.

viii) Facilities budget has increase from £971,531 to £ £1,024,172 due to a new cleaning contract, minimum wage increase and revised employers NI costs.

ix) The central contingency of £225,000 is being reviewed and projects that have been earmarked from this budget are progressing.

x) The budget is running as expected.

RESOLVED: That the budget position for 2025/2026 be noted.

10. ACCESSIBILITY PLAN AND POLICY

Mr Bailey introduced the Accessibility Plan and Policy that had been circulated to Governors prior to the meeting. He added that Governors need to review the Accessibility Plan and Policy annually. The Accessibility Plan and Policy covered the following:

a) Legislation and Guidance b) The aims of the college c) Monitoring and Evaluation d) Concerns and Complaints and e) The College's Action Plan.

The Mr Bailey drew Governors attention to the introduction of quiet zones for use during break/lunch, separate from the Learning Support hub.

Mr McGee added that some of the deadlines in the plan are very tight but the college should be able to meet the deadlines in the plan.

RESOLVED: That the Accessibility Plan and Policy be approved.

11. ACCOUNTABILITY STATEMENT

Mr Bailey introduced the Accountability Statement for 2025 that had been circulated to Governors prior to the meeting.

Ms Dommett advised Governors that at the recent DfE Strategy Meeting the DfE had been impressed with the way in which the college had amended its Accountability Statement. It illustrates more clearly how the college is aligned with students destinations. Mr McGee added that the DfE will carry out a light touch approach with colleges who are not a problem.

RESOLVED: That the Accountability Statement be approved.

12. ADMISSIONS POLICY

Ms Dommett introduced the revised Admissions Policy that had been circulated to Governors prior to the meeting. The revised Admissions Policy had been considered at a recent General Purposes Committee and had been circulated to all Governors. Stockport Education Authority had advised the college that there was no need to go out to consultation because the changes were not material. Once approved by the Governing Body the policy will sent to the Diocese and will be published on the college website. The changes will apply to Admissions to the college from September 2027.

RESOLVED: That the revised Admissions Policy to be implemented from September 2027 be approved.

13. GENDER PAY REPORT

Mrs Blackburn introduced the Gender Pay Report that had been circulated to Governors prior to the meeting. She advised Governors that the Gender Pay Report has to be on the Government Website by the 31 March 2026. The report is also on the college website and it will be submitted to the next meeting of the Employment Committee for information.

Mr McGee expressed the view that it is difficult to compare roles across the sector, job titles may be the same but the actual role different. Mrs Blackburn added that college is looking at support staff roles and grades and are trying to move to an appropriate grade for staff. Ms Dommett added that a review of teaching staff had already been undertaken. Dr Smith noted that in the upper quartile there were 63% female and 37% male at the college.

RESOLVED: That the Gender Pay Report be agreed.

14. (i) PRINCIPAL'S TERMLY REPORT

That 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 – Spring Term 2026, Be More – Positive Feedback and Reflective Prayers.

Ms Dommett advised Governors that the format of her report was still a work in progress and will develop over time. The Principal's report will provide a key point of reference for the challenges that the college is facing. It aims to provide easily referable data and ensure GDPR compliance. Governors are asked for their comments on the new format and if there anything that they would like to be included, they should let her know.

RESOLVED - That the Principal's report be received.

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

a) Student Progress

Students continue to make progress in line with the college's expectations. The L3VA places the college positively at a national level and all data suggest that students are on course to replicate or better last year's results. Retention has improved compared with last year suggesting that figures may be well above the national average.

b) Admissions

Recruitment into lower sixth for September 2026 looks healthy but the college is better prepared should it need to move to the waiting lists

c) Chaplaincy

The Chaplaincy report is in a slightly different format in that it covers the journey so far and also identifies the priorities and next steps for the remainder of the academic year.

d) Safeguarding and SEND

The college has made some changes to CPOMS so it is not possible to compare like with like across terms 1 and 2 of this academic year. Going forward it will be possible to compare term by term and year by year. Governors noted that in term 1 there had been 92 cases of concern from 62 students and in term 2 there had been 96 cases of concern from 72 students.

In term 2 there had been 45 incident of mental health issue from 39 students. The number of safeguarding issues were 96 covering 72 students, with 15 peer on peer abuse. There are now 4 more counselling sessions being offered by the college. Mr

Hynes sought clarification on the figures for mental health between terms 1 and 2. Mr Bailey explained the reasons for the two sets of figures

Attendance at the college is broken down by student groups including minority ethnicity. Mr Bailey felt that the college had been too generous in what had been accepted as an excuse for non attendance. Attendance was the highest in Greater Manchester and amongst ACVIC colleges. He added that it included stretch and support sessions along with Thrive Time activities. Mrs Watts expressed the view that U6 students will see a difference on how attendance is handled. Ms Dommett advised Governors that she had sent a letter to parents/carers at the start of the academic year outlining the college's expectations in relation to attendance. U6 core studies is where attendance is lowest. Attendance overall is 92% with 90.8% in L6 and 87.4% in U6.

d) Results Overview

Ms Phillips advised Governors that the college compared favourably in the DfE performance Tables for 2025. Details are shown below:

	Average Point per A level Entry	**Value Added per A level Entry**	**Average Point Score Per Applied**	**Value Added by Applied General Entry**	**English Value Added**	**Maths Value Added**
Aquinas College	36.92	0.03	32.59	0.26	0.85	0.89
Sixth Form Colleges and 16-19 Academies	35.64	0.02	32.67	0.21	0.49	0.35

Governors noted that the value added for English and Maths was very high and equates to an additional grade.

e) Human Resources

Governors noted the staffing appointments that had been made for November 2025 along with the leavers at the end during the same period. Due to an increase in student numbers the college is looking to expand the number of teachers for Art, History and Politics. An appointment had been made to the new post of Assistant Principal (Inclusion and Opportunity) to start in September 2026. A restructure of the IT department had also taken place. A review of support staff at the college would be undertaken in the summer term. This would involve benchmarking against regional and sector averages along with a review of roles and responsibilities.

f) Adult Education

Governors noted the following information in relation to Adult Education at the college:

i) GCSE examination entries along with assessment results for the AAT Level 2 and Level 3 Accountancy students.

ii) Satisfaction Survey

iii) Attendance and Retention

iv) Enrolment on Leisure courses

Ms Dommett advised Governors that Adult Education will be inspected separately from the main college. The AAT result are strong, attendance and retention is good, which places the college in a strong position. Ms Dommett added that in discussions with Stockport College it had provisionally been agreed that they would cease to run the courses that Aquinas delivers better

g) Careers

Governors noted the progress that had been made with the revised Gatsby Benchmark Framework. Along with the feedback from students on their careers interviews. Information was also provided on the support given to NEET students.

The Governors thanked Ms Dommett for her informative report and asked that she pass on to all staff the Governors appreciation of the excellent work that they are doing at the college.

Mr Hynes left the meeting at this point.

15. NEW OFSTED FRAMEWORK

Ms Phillips provided Governors with an update on the proposed changes in the new Ofsted framework. She added that staff had attended a number of webinars to get a better understanding of the new framework. The framework would be based on the report card for Further Education and Skills. The college would be judged on three areas, a) Leadership and Governance, ii) Inclusion and iii) Safeguarding. The college would not be judged on Contribution to meeting Skills needs because it is a stand alone sixth form college. Ms Phillips added that skills is woven all the way through.

The single word judgement has been replaced. For Leadership and Governance and Inclusion one of the following judgements will be made, Exceptional, Strong standard, Expected standard, Needs attention or Urgent improvement. In the case of Safeguarding it will be Met or Not met. The inspection starts with assumption that all areas are at the expected standard. The awarding of Exceptional standard will be very rare.

There are three areas within the inspection framework i) Education programmes for young people, ii) Adult learning programmes and iii) Provision for learners with high needs (including both mainstream and Pathways). Each area is sub divided into three a) Curriculum, teaching and training, b) Achievement and c) Participation and development.

The college has started doing its own self assessment to ensure that all the standards are met. It will need to provide evidence to support the self assessment. The college must meet the Expected standard in all areas before it can go for a strong standard.

Mr McGee felt that the college would be inspected early in the 2026/2027 academic year. Therefore, it may be necessary to have an informal meeting in September to prepare for the inspection.

Ms Dommett added that there will be a clear focus on governance and that the expectation is that Governors knowledge and understanding of the college is now higher.

She added that she would like to establish an Ofsted taskforce including Governors with the aim of upskilling them in relation to their understanding of the college's strategic plan, results analysis, SAR and QIP ahead of the training session in May 2026.

The Clerk to the Governors was asked to forward to Governors a recording of the recent SFCA webinar on the new Inspection Framework.

16. GOVERNOR TRAINING SESSION

Governors noted that the training session was scheduled for 6 May 2026 at 4.00pm, which is earlier than usual. It was agreed that the following items would be included in the training session.

a) Ofsted Update

b) Safeguarding Update

17. CORRESPONDENCE

No correspondence was brought forward for Governor's consideration.

18. ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS

a) Changes to Post 16 Curriculum Landscape

i) Level 3 Landscape

Ms Dommett introduced a paper that summarised the proposed changes to the post 16 Curriculum that had been circulated to Governors prior to the meeting. The government had confirmed the timeline for the introduction of V Levels. There will be single size courses which can be taken alongside A Levels or other V Levels, as our BTECs and Applied courses are currently. Within each subject there will only be one course, and this will meet national standards. The paper outlined the proposed timeline for introduction of the changes which are as follows.

Academic Year	**Subjects**
2027/2028	Digital, Finance and Accounting, Education and Early Years
2028/2029	Business and Administration, Care Services, Construction, Engineering and Manufacturing, Health and Science, Legal, Sales, Marketing and Procurement, Sport, Fitness and Exercise Science.
2029/2030	Agriculture, Environment and Animal Care, Catering and Hospitality, Hair and Beauty, Protective Services.
2030/2031	Art and Performing Arts, Creative and Design, Travel and Tourism.

All remaining legacy level 3 vocational and technical qualifications will be removed from 2030/2031.

The college currently offers vocational courses in Digital, Business and Administration, Health and Science, Legal, Sport, Fitness and Exercise Science, Protective Services, Art and Performing Arts, Creative and Design. The college has previously offered an accountancy course, so this along with some others may be something for the college to explore. Criminology, which is the largest subject offered at the college is not on the list.

The government intends to publish an implementation plan by June 2026 which will set out further details.

The government is consulting on a Level 1 qualification for students who achieve a Grade 1 or 2 in English and/or Maths GCSE. Students who achieve a grade 3 will still be expected to resit the GCSE course. The college will still be able to offer the opportunity for students to resit Maths or English alongside A Level and V Level qualifications.

The current Level 2 programme offered by the college is for students who do not have sufficient qualifications to access Level 3 courses. The government is proposing two pathways for students at this level, Further Study Pathway and Occupational Pathway. Students at the college around 40 will be on the Further Study Pathway. Currently the college offers Business, an Aspire Programme, Core Programme and Tutorial alongside two GCSE resit opportunities. The college expect to be able o offer something similar in the Further Study Pathway.

iii) Next Steps

The DfE will require all post 16 providers to provide a "Strategic Transition Planning Statement by mid June 2026. The college's response will be 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.

19. DATE OF NEXT MEETINGS

a) Governor Training Session - 6 May 2026 at 4.00pm

b) Summer Term Meeting - 7 July 2026 at 4.30pm

Signed _____ Date _____

Chairperson