PUBLIC

Approved SANDWELL COLLEGE

Minutes of the Board of Governors meeting held on Thursday 26 March 2026 at 4.00pm Cadbury St Michael's Sixth Form – Board Room

Present:	Anne Frost	Independent – Chair
	Lisa Capper MBE	CEO & Principal
	Gareth Amison	Independent
	Mark Ashford	Independent
	Bridgette Bennett	Staff Governor – Sandwell
	Clare Boden-Hatton	Independent
	Dan Parrott	Independent – via Teams
	Hasmik Sargsyan	Student Governor – Sandwell – via Teams
	Johnny Shah	Independent
	Tony Sharma	Independent
Apologies:	Shokat Lal	Independent
	Lucy Richardson	Staff Governor - Cadbury
	Sonia Smalling	Independent
	Leandre Williams	Student Governor - Cadbury
In attendance:	Becky Beaty	Executive Director Human Resources & Organisational Development
	Emma Brennan	Senior Vice Principal Quality & Student Success
	Asa Gordon	Deputy Principal Curriculum & Skills
	Ian Oldacre	Director of Estates and Capital Projects (for Item 12)
	Rob Pickup	Executive Director, Finance and Resources
	Jean Tracy	Interim Director of Governance

		Action
1	**Item 1: Welcome and Apologies**	
1.1 1.2	The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, and informed the Board that Rachel Barlow has resigned and that Harpinder Singh was on a leave of absence, both being for personal reasons. Leandre Williams was also on leave of absence. Apologies were received from Shokat Lal, Lucy Richardson and Sonia Smalling.	
2 2.1	**Item 2: Declarations of any new personal or business interest or conflict with any agenda item** There were no new declarations.	
  3.1	**Item 3: Appointment of Members of the Board of Governors:** **3.1 Mark Ashford** The Board **approved** the appointment of Mark Ashford for second term of office, and as a member of Audit Committee, his term of office being 13 March 2026 to 12 March 2029.	

3.2 3.3	**3.2 Shokat Lal** The Board **approved** the appointment of Shokat Lal, and as a member of Finance & Strategy Committee, his term of office being 18 April 2026 to 31 July 2026. Both appointments were on the recommendation of Search & Governance Committee.	
4.1 4.2 4.3 4.4 4.5 4.6	**Item 4: Chair's Business** **4.1 Vacancies Arising** The Chair reminded Governors of the current Committee vacancies on Audit, Finance & Strategy and Search & Governance Committees, and asked that they give consideration to membership and to contact the Interim Director of Governance. The Board also **agreed** to go out for an external recruitment of 4 governors, including 2 co-optees. The Interim Director of Governance would take this forward with the Chair and CEO & Principal. Following Rachel Barlow's resignation, it was **agreed** that Dan Parrott would take on the role of Chair of Finance & Strategy Committee. **4.2 Committee Membership** Vacancies on Audit (*2) and Search & Governance and a were again noted. Noting the membership of Tony Sharma on Learners, Quality & Curriculum Committee, the Board **confirmed** the increase the Committee membership to 6. The Terms of Reference would be amended. The Chair thanked those staff who had taken the minutes of the Committee meetings during the Interim Director of Governance's absence.	Board Members IDG/Chair/ CEO&P IDG
	Item 5: Minutes of the Meetings of the Board of Governors held on 8 December 2025	
5.1	The minutes of the meeting of the Board of Governors held on 8 December 2025 were reviewed and **approved** by Governors as a true and correct record.	
	Item 6: Matters Arising and Action Progress Report	
6.1 6.2	The Board noted the updates on the action progress report. The risk register reports would be updated to make smarter in terms of mitigation; the Chair reminded Board members of the vacancy for the Vice Chair. The Interim Director of Governance would follow up with those Governors yet to confirm acceptance of the Code of Conduct. All other items were either complete on on-going.	EDF&R IDG
	STRATEGIC AND DEVELOPMENTAL	
  7.1	**Item 7: Learner Voice Film and Learner Voice & Experience Update Report** There were technical difficulties in loading the film and thus it was **agreed** that this would be sent out to Governors. *Post meeting update: Action completed.*	 IDG
	Item 8: CEO & Principal's Report	

8.1	The CEO & Principal's report covered headline information, skills and capacity building, Your Future Our Focus Curriculum & Quality, and policy and funding updates.	
	Headlines	
8.2	The Ofsted inspection report was strong and had been well received. An update on the College's rapid response and the impact of that response would be covered later in the agenda by the Senior Vice Principal Quality & Student Success.	
8.3	The Board noted the current position against the learner recruitment target, and that this was the largest number the College had ever achieved. The College was on target for in-year growth of around £1m and thus was in a strong financial position, the College being ahead of budget.	
8.4	The College was currently at 90% achieved in relation to the growth funding and was working to increase this figure. Achievement for 2026/2027 was on track, including that for apprenticeships.	
	Skills and Capacity Building	
8.5	The report provided the Board with examples of this work – the launch of the Engineering Skills Hub, the handover and launch of the Midland Metropolitan University Hospital Learning Campus and the College's role in the West Midlands Construction Technical College.	
8.6	The Estates Strategy included the development of capacity in construction, engineering and digital, with the Future Focused Leadership Strategy covered in the paper from the Executive Director HR & OD. The Board noted the feedback from Watchword - that the College was outstanding in terms of community cohesion. A new tranche of work with the local schools was underway and revamped Open Days had taken place.	
	Your Future Our Focus Curriculum & Quality	
8.7	The Board was informed that curriculum planning was on track, with the development of the adult curriculum focusing on jobs and progression. The College's Quality & Improvement Plan (QIP) had been scrutinised by Learners, Quality & Curriculum Committee. The Board noted the impact in the second term of the Thrive strategy, and the work being undertaken in relation to parent communication and engagement strategy. A media pack had been included in the Board papers; the outstanding work of the College being referred to in 2 parliamentary questions/debates.	
8.8	A member of the Board asked if there were any challenges in terms of resourcing/staffing. The CEO & Principal acknowledged that this was the case, but the this had been planned for. The Deputy Principal Curriculum & Quality referred to the planned growth in ESOL and the sourcing of additional staff in-year. As expected, challenges remained around recruitment in the priority sectors.	
	Policy & Funding Updates	
8.9	The CEO & Principal provided further detail on the funding announcement, the qualification reforms at L2 and L3 and the SEND schools widening participation consultation.	
8.10	It was **agreed** that the qualification reforms and the impact on the College should be included in the agenda for the Board Away Day on 8 May 2026.	CEO&P
8.11	The CEO & Principal made reference to the three annexes to her report. Included was the letter from the Minister of Skills requesting the submission of a strategic transition planning statement (Annex 2). The Chair encouraged Governors to read the letter from the FE Commissioner (Annex 3) which highlighted the importance of the triumvirate, senior post holder appointment	

	and the Board Assurance Framework in the delivery of strong and effective governance.	
8.12	The Board noted the reforms in Special Education Need and on how this would affect delivery at the College.	
	Item 9: Ofsted Presentation & Paper on Value Added	
9.1	Presentation slides on the highlights and next steps in relation to the Ofsted inspection were shared, and were as reviewed by Learners, Quality & Curriculum Committee at its meeting on 11 March 2026.	
9.2	Feedback from the Inspection Team included the progress made since the previous inspection, recognition of excellence within a number of areas and the ethos of the College. The Senior Vice Principal Quality & Student Success explained the score card and the background to the 'needs attention' judgement on Education Programme from Young People (EPYP) achievement. The slides also covered 'what's next' - monitoring inspection, meetings to discuss actions, progress and impact, for example.	
9.3	An update on the Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) was considered, noting that this had been scrutinised by Learners, Quality & Curriculum Committee at its meeting on 11 March 2026. A top-level summary of strengths and further areas for development for each priority of the QIP was included, the Board noting that departmental QIPs were reviewed 4/5 times during the year.	
9.4	The Value-Added Report provided information on the College's response to the Ofsted Inspection judgement on value added and the progress and impact made to date. The 6-strand action plan had been developed to provide a focus on short-term/rapid actions to accelerate academic progress for current cohorts, with medium-term plans to embed sustainable improvements to teaching and assessment practices, as well as to enable a strategic review and implementation of possible curriculum design changes.	
9.5	In answer to a question from a member of the Board, the Senior Vice Principal Quality & Student Success explained that in order to remove the 'amber' grading, the College needed to show higher grade achievement. In the reinspection, inspectors would speak to staff, students and governors but that the College could not say what actual improvement would be needed.	
9.6	The Board noted that curriculum planning would be shared with governors in order to provide an understanding of the potential impact of proposed changes.	
	5.30pm – 5.35pm – Short break	
	FINANCE & RESOURCES	
	Item 10: Management Accounts	
10.1	The Management Accounts for period 6 (January 2026) were considered. The executive summary included information on the operating surplus at period 6, curriculum costs and depreciation and release of deferred capital grants. The KPIs remained on track for 'outstanding' financial health at year end.	
10.2	More detailed information on headlines, financial summary, KPIs, cash, income and expenditure and capital expenditure was included in the report and was reviewed by the Board.	
10.3	The Executive Director Finance & Resources also provided an update on changes to LGPS and the College's contribution.	

10.4	A member of the Board wished to thank the College for the improvements in the report format/content, this providing better clarity.	
	<u>Item 11: Budget Setting Timetable</u>	
11.1	The Board considered the Budget timetable for 2026.2027, noting that this remained consistent with previous years. It was noted that a detailed timetable had been shared with budget holders, with the Finance team providing support and progress monitoring.	
	5.53pm The Director Estates & Capital Projects joined the meeting.	
	<u>Item 12: Health & Safety Update Report</u>	
12.1	The Director Estates & Capital Projects presented the report. As previously requested, staff training had been separated; the Health & Safety Board report format had also been amended to provide a clear layout and also assurance of the level of safety in the relevant sections.	
12.2	A member of the Board commented on the incident raw numbers, and suggested that the College might want to convert this to a 12-month rolling rate, and taking account incidents against the whole population.	DE&CP
12.3	The Board noted that the College had moved to a compliance system for H&S reviews and that a Compliance Officer had been appointed.	
12.4	The Chair commented on the number of 'moderate' assurances and asked whether an external assessment was required in order to bring about higher levels of assurance. The Director Estates & Capital Projects was confident that the changes being introduced would effect improvements in assurance ratings, and that work was continuing to ensure that all areas were covered.	
12.5	A member of the Board asked who was accountable for each of the sites and was informed that all site managers and supervisors were adequately trained to carry out this role, with the Head of Campus for each site being responsible for Health & Safety and the Compliance Officer's role being to ensure compliance across the College.	
	6.09pm The Director Estates & Capital Projects left the meeting.	
	<u>GOVERNANCE</u>	
	<u>Item 13: Feedback from the Committee Chairs</u> **<u>Item 13.1: Audit 3 March 2026</u>** **<u>Item 13.2: Search & Governance – 9 March 2026</u>** **<u>Item 13.3: Learners, Quality & Curriculum – 11 March 2026</u>** **<u>Item 13.4: Finance & Strategy – 12 March 2026</u>** **<u>Item 13.5: Performance & Remuneration – 19 March 2026</u>**	
13.1	Feedback from the Committee Chairs was noted.	
	<u>Item 14: Link Governor Scheme/Visit Feedback</u> **<u>Item 14.1: Health & Safety (Link)</u>** **<u>Item 14.2: CSM (Visit)</u>** **<u>Item 14.3: English & Maths (Visit)</u>**	
14.1	The Board noted the feedback as per the reports. The Chair thanked those involved.	
	<u>Item 15: Schedule of Meetings 2026/2027</u>	

15.1	The Board **noted** the draft schedule of meetings 2026/2027, and that this would be reviewed with the College calendar had been finalised and brought to the July Board meeting for approval.	
	CONSENT AGENDA	
	Item 16: Risk Register & Board Assurance Framework	
16.1	The Risk Register and Board Assurance Report included detail on the risk added following discussion at Learners, Quality & Curriculum Committee – the inability to maintain the appropriate capacity and capability within the senior leadership team and the governing body.	
16.2	The Board also **approved** the removal of risk R13 – the inability to attract new partnerships and/or sustain partnerships to support the curriculum and wider college – noting the recommendation of Learners, Quality & Curriculum Committee following the progress made and as highlighted by the Ofsted inspection.	
16.3	Information on the current high-level risks and on those risks with changes to ratings was provided in the report.	
	Item 17: HR & OD Report	
17.1	The update report on Human Resources & Organisational Development had been scrutinised by Finance & Strategy Committee at its meeting on 12 March 2026. The report set out progress in meeting the commitments of the College's strategic plan and updates on recruitment, wellness, development, recognition and employee relations activities.	
17.2	The Executive Director HR & OD was asked whether there was any evidence on the impact of the cost of living crisis. Whilst currently there was no tangible evidence, there had been a higher uptake on sessions such as financial advice. The College was mindful of the situation.	
	Item 18: Written Resolution	
18.1	The Board noted the written resolution relating to the appointment of the Director of Governance, dated 29 January 2026 and approved 31 January 2026.	
18.2	The Director of Governance would take up office on 1 August 2026, with the Interim Director of Governance continuing in the role and providing support and handover from August 2026.	
	Item 19: Policy/Procedure Approvals/Note **Item 19.1:AI Policy** **Item 19.2: Freedom of Speech Policy** **Item 19.3: Procedure for the Appointment of Members of the Board of Governors** **Item 19.4: Procedure for the Removal of a Governor from Office** **Item 19.5: Governors' Attendance** **Item 19.6: Governors' Expenses** **Item 19.7: Governors' Conflict of Interest Policy** **Item 19.9: Use of the Seal**	
19.1	On the recommendation of Search & Governance Committee, the Board approved the policies/procedures as listed above. The Interim Director of Governance would be following up on some clarification requested by the Committee in relation to the process to be followed in the absence of a Vice Chair.	

	Item 20: Any Other Business	
20.1	There were no items of any other business.	
20.2	The Chair noted the discussions which had taken place on the timings of the agenda items and hoped Governors felt this had improved. Work in this area would continue.	
	6.23pm The Chair thanked the Staff and Student Governors for their attendance; they then left the meeting.	
	CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS	
	See Confidential Minutes	
	Item 26: Date of Next meetings Friday 8 May 2026 – Annual Strategy & Development Day – Sandwell Board Room, 11am to 4.99pm Thursday 2 July 2026 – MMUH Hospital Site – Room tbc – 4.00pm to 7.00pm (confirmation of venue noted) The Chair reminded those present of the Away Day to be held on 8 May 2026 and all were encouraged to attend. The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance and contribution.	

The meeting ended at 6.53 pm.