

# HARLOW COLLEGE FURTHER EDUCATION CORPORATION

## STANDARDS AND CURRICULUM COMMITTEE

### Minutes of the meeting held at Harlow College on Wednesday 03 December 2025, 1.30pm

Membership:                   \*Rod Bristow (Chair)  
                                  \*Caroline Betts  
                                  Vic Goddard  
                                  \*Neala Goddard-Bird  
                                  Stephen Isherwood  
                                  \*Ayub Khan  
                                  \*Karen Spencer

\*denotes present

In attendance               Becky Jones, Deputy Principal  
                                  Simon Boyce, Vice-Principal  
                                  Kirstie Craig, Vice-Principal  
                                  Laura Wedgbury-Glew, Assistant Principal  
                                  Tracy Mucci, Assistant Principal  
                                  Viv Kimeng-Nwauzu, Head of Academy  
                                  Julien Sample, Executive Director – Business Development  
                                  Ruth Lucas, Head of Governance

#### **1 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Vic Goddard and Stephen Isherwood due to work commitments.

#### **2 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **3 Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the Standards and Curriculum Committee meeting held on 19 June 2025 were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting.

#### **4 Matters Arising from the Minutes (not mentioned elsewhere on the agenda)**

There were no matters arising.

#### **5 Self-Assessment and Quality Improvement Plans**

##### **5.1 College Performance – Five-Year Trend Data**

The Standards and Curriculum Committee received and considered the report on College performance – five-year trend data, presented by Becky Jones, Deputy Principal.

Becky Jones reported that there has been a 4.5% improvement in achievement and a 1.4% improvement in retention in 2024-2025, compared to the previous year. These improved rates have resulted in a positive trajectory in high grades. Attendance has dipped slightly however the College's approach to recording attendance has changed and was expected.

The following areas will be focused on for action and improvement: Digital IT; Health and Social Care, particularly Level 2, A-Levels and formative assessment of STAC apprentices.

Apprenticeship overall achievement was 62% and is showing slow and steady year-on-year improvement. A Governor reported that slow, steady progress is good and it demonstrates that the College is constantly building on its work and improving.

Childcare has seen improvements and the Business and Journalism and Media teams had overall improvements in their achievement rates, despite some particular challenges in the year.

English GCSE grade 9 – 4 was 22%, which is in line with national benchmarks and maths was 24%, 8% above the national benchmark of 16%.

Significant improvements have been made in the adult team which is now excelling in achievement, teaching, learning and assessment, retention and earning income.

Becky Jones reported that some staff are more open to change than others therefore consistency across the organisation takes a while to achieve.

A Governor reported that there will always be variability and asked if this was something on its own that the College tries to minimise. Karen Spencer reported that there is always variability due to the qualification achievement rates and that there is a need for granularity. Historically some colleges have removed all of some types of provision to chase high success rates however there is a need to balance this. Becky Jones reported that in adopting the College's approach to training staff, with currently ten staff of teaching apprenticeships, the College is able to standardise this therefore there is more consistency and staff are trained on the way the College works.

Governors' attention was brought to paragraph 5 in agenda item 5.2 – Curriculum, Teaching and Training. The number of "met" judgements in walkthroughs has increased from 80.9% in 2023-2024 to 89% in 2024-2025. Improvements have been made across all provision types. Advanced Practitioners are supporting new and inexperienced teachers and this is helping to reduce the variability in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.

Karen Spencer reported that there is not a lot of difference in the upper and lower quartile data figures produced by the Association of Colleges and that there is not much recent consistent national data available. Last year's data will

be published fully next year. In general, further education in England does not have much variability.

A Governor highlighted the good walkthrough outcomes and asked if this correlates to the improved achievement and retention rates. Becky Jones reported it would be harder to measure however instinctively felt there is a correlation.

A Governor reported that following on from their self-assessment session before this meeting, there is a need to clarify the role of student ambassadors.

The Standards and Curriculum Committee noted the report on College performance – five-year trend data.

## **5.2 Curriculum, Teaching and Training**

The Standards and Curriculum Committee received and considered the report on curriculum, teaching and training, presented by Becky Jones, Deputy Principal.

This report was covered in agenda item 5.1 – College Performance – Five-Year Trend Data.

The Standards and Curriculum Committee noted the report on curriculum, teaching and training.

## **5.3 Education Programmes for Young People**

The Standards and Curriculum Committee received and considered the report on education programmes for young people, presented by Laura Wedgbury-Glew, Assistant Principal.

Governors' attention was brought to the 90.3% retention rate which demonstrates that students are choosing the right courses. There is a small dip in retention this year to date however it is still early in the academic year.

Laura Wedgbury-Glew reported that value added remains an issue. It has been identified that there is work that needs to be done in A-Levels to push students to achieve high grades.

A Governor asked how value added is measured. Karen Spencer reported that the College uses ALPS however lots of tertiary colleges have stopped using ALPS as the DfE have now published the technical guidance for progress measures. ALPS was originally designed for sixth form colleges. An internal discussion is taking place on how best to measure progress and whether it would be better to use the metrics that Ofsted and Government use. Becky Jones highlighted that there is a section in the College's Quality Improvement Plan on value added. Governors were informed that it is a 1 – 8 scale and that A-Level value added is 6 and AS-Level 4, which puts the College in the average range for all providers. UAL value added is lower however a full data set is not available and there are large areas of the College's provision that are not

measured as they fall outside of ALPS. Governors were informed that students are achieving what they are expected to although they are measured against the top quartile and it only measures some students, not all.

Karen Spencer reported that strong colleges have stopped using ALPS. A Governor asked why is it working for schools and not colleges. Karen Spencer reported that the majority of schools have only just started using it and it is being picked up by multi-academy trusts. Strong tertiary colleges are good measure and many have stopped using it. Karen Spencer reported that the College's issue is high grades and stretch and challenge.

A Governor reported that it appears that value added itself is an issue and how it is measured is another issue.

Governors' attention was brought to the new attendance system which has been introduced and were informed that the dip in attendance was not as high as was expected. There are now only four attendance marks that can be used and it mirrors the College's system for staff. Laura Wedgbury-Glew confirmed that there are high levels of attendance.

Laura Wedgbury-Glew reported that acting on views scored lower than other areas in the student satisfaction survey. The College is responsive to acting on views however the message is not always getting back to students.

Governors noted that there has been a push on learners with dyslexia and there are year-on-year improvements in closing the gap for these learners.

The Standards and Curriculum Committee noted the report on education programmes for young people.

#### **5.4 Adult Programmes**

The Standards and Curriculum Committee received and considered the report on adult programmes, presented by Karen Spencer, Principal.

Karen Spencer reported that there have been strong overall performance and improvements in adult programmes. There have been significant improvements in Access, Childcare and ESOL. ESOL continues to be a challenge with learners being relocated away from Harlow, often without any notice and the College has no way of tracking them.

There is a focus on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, as demonstrated in the walkthrough data, and learner satisfaction.

Attendance is strong and stable however it is lower on long programmes as learners often have other commitments that prevent them from attending. The College is strengthening its information, advice and guidance (IAG) to ensure learners have the time and means to commit to the course. The group of learners most in need to improve their skills, often need to work and are on in-work benefits and cannot afford to study.

Governors noted that there is a need to focus on the accountancy provision and this came through as well from the feedback from Mindful. There is also a focus on embedding English and maths and there is a need to strengthen data collection for short employability courses.

A Governor asked if the difficulties with accountancy leans to the cost of living. Karen Spencer reported that people want to change their career however need to commit to studying in the evening. Previously IAG has not fully articulated the commitment and difficult external exam requirements are an issue. The initial assessment for AAT courses is being tightened up to ensure that it is an appropriate course for the learners.

The Standards and Curriculum Committee noted the report on adult programmes.

## **5.5 Apprenticeships**

The Standards and Curriculum Committee received and considered the report on apprenticeships, presented by Kirstie Craig, Vice-Principal.

Kristie Craig reported that both the achievement and retention rate of 2024-2025 was 62%. Governors were informed that the retention rate for apprentices is calculated differently and that it is based on those that have gone through the Gateway to End Point Assessment. It is positive if the retention rate is aligned to the achievement rate. The College's rates are slightly above national averages at 60.5%. Significant contributors to the improved achievement rates are Construction with 62%, 9% higher than the previous year, Electrical at 59%, a 7% increase and Automotive at 79%, a 57% increase. The target set by the DfE within the Apprenticeship Accountability Framework is 60% therefore the College is now above this target.

Governors were informed that there have been improvements across all the teams. The frequency and quality of the progress reviews, 12-weekly meetings with the apprentice, employer and the College, has improved. This has led to better feedback to the apprentices and closer contact with the employers. Apprentice and employer feedback is positive.

English and maths attendance continues to be monitored and of particular note is the good work being undertaken by the Adult Basic Skills team. No apprentices have been prevented going through their End Point Assessment due to English and maths.

Work will continue on improving elements of teaching and learning.

A Governor highlighted the good progress that had been made and asked about the 13.8% who are over 180 days beyond their planned end date. Kirstie Craig reported that the planned end date is the expected end of the practical period and when apprentices are predicted to go through the Gateway for End Point Assessment preparation. The College monitors how far over 180 days these apprentices are. They are mainly on long apprenticeship programmes, such as

electrical or manufacturing engineering, which can last four years. Significant progress has been made with this and it is expected that a number of them will complete soon. The College's 13.8% is within the Apprenticeship Accountability Framework range.

A Governor asked what the barriers were for these apprentices. Kirstie Craig reported that most are due to timings at their workplace and elements of the assessment which need to be seen. There are also some issues with staff retention.

A Governor asked about the feedback from Ofsted in May 2024 and how this has been addressed by the College. Kirstie Craig reported that the quality of progress reviews has improved and the template to record them has been updated. Walkthrough data highlights that teaching and learning has improved.

A Governor asked what the total number of apprentices the College has and Kirstie Craig reported that it is a constantly moving number however generally between 480 and 500 and 73 apprentices achieved their qualification last academic year.

The Standards and Curriculum Committee noted the report on apprenticeships.

## **5.6 English and Maths**

The Standards and Curriculum Committee received and considered the report on English and maths, presented by Viv Kimeng-Nwauzu, Head of Academy.

Viv Kimeng-Nwauzu reported that the College had achieved 24% grade 9 – 4 in maths, putting the College 56<sup>th</sup> out of 211 colleges nationally and in the top 25% of colleges nationally. English was 22%, placing the College 121<sup>st</sup> out of 211 colleges and in the median quartile nationally. The College is significantly above national benchmarks. Nine learners with a previous grade 2 in maths achieved a grade 4 or above and seven learners with a previous grade 2 in English achieved a grade 4 or above. There is a continued focus on achieving high grades in English.

Level 2 Adult Functional Skills achieved a 62% pass rate, almost double the national benchmark of 32%.

Attendance at GCSE English and maths exams was 95%.

A Governor asked how the College achieved the success it has had with English and maths. Viv Kimeng-Nwauzu reported that there is close working with the teachers and teams and there are visits to other colleges to share best practice. In-class progress checks take place and there is a focus on teaching, learning and assessment in conjunction with the Quality Team. Training with the Awarding Organisation has taken place and there has been a change in mindset within the team.

Karen Spencer reported that students are accepting that English and maths is part of College and Viv Kimeng-Nwauzu reported that it is talked about in a

positive way with students. Tracy Mucci reported that it is raised highly in Head of Academy meetings and Laura Wedgbury-Glew reported that positive conversations are taking place with teams around timetabling.

Karen Spencer reported that a new Level 1 qualification is being proposed as part of the White Paper and the College is starting to put some ideas around this on paper.

A Governor asked what is next for English and maths. Viv Kimeng-Nwauzu reported she would like achievement rates to be at 50%. A Governor asked if any provider was achieving this. Karen Spencer reported that there are smaller providers achieving this however their cohorts are very different to those of the College.

The Standards and Curriculum Committee noted the report on English and maths.

## **5.7 Inclusion**

The Standards and Curriculum Committee received and considered the report on inclusion, presented by Tracy Mucci, Assistant Principal.

Tracy Mucci reported that the College is working hard to narrow the gaps for all groups of learners, however inclusion covers all learners across the College.

High needs funded learners outperform their peers, with an 87% achievement rate compared to 84.7% for their peers. This is largely due to the College's strong adaptive teaching approach. There are robust EHCP processes in place and strong partnerships with schools and external agencies. The College is replicating and developing on what is working well in schools and the multi-agency work is a strength.

Gaps for learners from an ethnic minority background and bursary learners are reducing through early interventions and further development work.

Governors were informed that pastoral support is strong and outcomes for safeguarded and vulnerable learners have improved, with achievement at 72.6%, compared to 68.5% in the previous year. Retention has also improved.

Tracy Mucci reported that the College has commissioned an external SEND audit which will be used to benchmark the College against national benchmarks.

A Governor asked what specific intervention would reduce the achievement gap for bursary learners. Tracy Mucci reported that drop-in sessions are now being held for these learners and workshops are also being trialled. Sometimes these learners do not have access to technology or support from home therefore these sessions are crucial for them.

There is a low take up of free school meals compared to the number of students who are eligible. There is also a lower take up from those who are most in need.

There is a whole-College approach to supporting vulnerable learners and the teams are working hard to support them. Pen portraits are now in place for each learner and this has helped staff to identify vulnerable learners easily and quickly.

A Governor asked if results will be seen in this academic year or in years to come and Tracy Mucci reported it is expected in both.

A Governor asked if the colleges visited are seen as best practice in the region and Tracy Mucci reported it is a mixture.

Governors were informed that the College is classed as a mild to moderate provision for high needs learners and that Essex County Council has moved to a banding system for high needs funding where every learner is placed in a band.

Karen Spencer reported that it would be useful to drill down further into the data for looked after children, care leavers and safeguarded learners and look at the detail for each group separately.

A Governor asked about the achievement and retention gaps for ethnic minority learners and if some of it was connected to disadvantage. Karen Spencer reported that some are ESOL learners experiencing issues discussed earlier in the meeting and there was a particular issue with under-achieving Black males however a lot of work has been done with the relevant teams to address this.

A Governor asked how the gaps for ethnic minority learners can be addressed. Karen Spencer reported that there is a need to identify if it is an ethnicity issue or an ESOL-type issue.

A Governor asked if the College ethnic minority background of 20% is representative of Harlow and the surrounding area. Karen Spencer reported it broadly matches and Harlow is around 17%.

A Governor asked what are the destinations for these cohorts of learners. Tracy Mucci reported that the College has a strong track record of learners securing supported internships and a lot of the learners progress through the different levels at College and into employment.

The Standards and Curriculum Committee noted the report on inclusion.

## **5.8 Participation and Development**

The Standards and Curriculum Committee received and considered the report on participation and development, presented by Simon Boyce, Vice-Principal.

Simon Boyce reported that there has been strong growth in employability encounters for learners and that 84% of learners achieved the additional 100 hours of additional non-curriculum activities. Communication skills is recorded as the biggest skill gained from these activities.

Governors were informed that placement opportunities with employers are strong and that 100% T-Level placement was achieved. There is an increasing demand on employers to provide placements and work experience and this could become an issue.

The College prides itself in being able to offer opportunities to students that would not have been available to them. The upcoming Bali trip will prioritise disadvantaged and SEND students and all activities offered as part of enrichment are accessible and free. Karen Spencer reported that the College's intention is to give opportunities to those who would face barriers in accessing these opportunities outside of College. Becky Jones reported that it makes students feel part of the College and gives them a sense of belonging.

A Governor asked how are young people prepared for life during their time at College and do the students know what exactly is meant by enrichment. Does it help them regardless of class and does it prepare them for life? It is important that whatever is done is made clearer for learners and there is a need to ensure it is impactful.

A Governor asked if there is any correlation between the 60% of full-time students accessing enrichment opportunities and better achievement on their programmes. Simon Boyce reported that it is difficult to confirm however there has been an increase in enrichment and an increase in achievement so there could be a link.

Outreach work with schools and perspective students has increased and waiting lists for some courses are already being put in place for 2026-2027.

The Standards and Curriculum Committee noted the report on participation and development.

## **5.9 Meeting Skills' Needs**

The Standards and Curriculum Committee received and considered the report on meeting skills' needs, presented by Julien Sample – Executive Director, Business Development.

The first section of the report is a review of last academic year and the contribution the College has made to meeting skills' needs. Julien Sample reported that there is now a focus on what is happening in every team and there is a need to delve deeper into this.

Governors were informed that the new Ofsted toolkit will require the College to change its approach slightly. Meeting skills' needs is now a judgement in its own right and no longer a sub-judgement and the quality of what is taking place to address skills' needs will be looked at more. There is an Executive Focus Group on employer engagement which will focus on how to achieve the top judgement.

A Governor asked what the data points are. Julien Sample said progress is as expected at the moment and the College has the grounding to work towards the top grade of "exceptional standard" and share practice with other colleges.

The second section of the report links to the College's strategic priority sector of construction and how the College is making good progress towards achieving its strategic intentions. Julien Sample reported that there are lots of rapid changes and interventions from Government that the College needs to keep abreast of, however the College is flexible and adaptive to take advantage of changes in landscape.

A Governor asked if there was any update on the Construction Skills Hub. Julien Sample reported that the College has received funding from Harlow Council to recommission the Hub, a planning enquiry has been submitted and the College is in discussion with UK Health Security Agency around a longer lease.

The Standards and Curriculum Committee noted the report on meeting skills' needs.

### **5.10 What Is It Like To Be A Learner At Harlow College**

The Standards and Curriculum Committee received and considered the report on what is it like to be a learner at Harlow College, presented by Laura Wedgbury-Glew, Assistant Principal.

Laura Wedgbury-Glew reported that the Student Ambassador groups that met as part of the self-assessment event agreed with the points in the report on what it is like to be a learner at Harlow College. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive however there is a need to have some form of communication to inform students of what the College has done in response to student feedback.

Students reported on receiving positive feedback on their work from staff however there is a need for stretch and challenge to be better recorded in walkthroughs and what is being looked at when this judgment is being made.

The Standards and Curriculum Committee noted the report on what is it like to be a learner at Harlow College.

### **5.11 Leadership and Governance – Proposed Self-Assessment Gratings**

The Standards and Curriculum Committee received and considered the report on leadership and governance – proposed self-assessment gradings, presented by Becky Jones, Deputy Principal.

Becky Jones reported that the new Ofsted toolkit now has a five-point scale for its judgements, as follows:

- Exceptional Standard
- Strong Standard
- Expected Standard
- Need Attention
- Urgent Improvement

The old “Good” grading is now split into “Expected Standard” and “Strong Standard” and there is no overall grade. There is now a judgment on inclusion and there are three areas for judgement for each provision type. In total 16 judgement will be made.

Karen Spencer reported that the AoC is collecting information from pilot inspections and will feed back on this.

Governors’ attention was brought to the self-assessed proposed grading for each judgement in Section C of the report. Karen Spencer reported that there is a discussion to be had as to whether the self-assessed proposed grading should be used for the 2024-2025 Self-Assessment Report as the old Ofsted Framework was in operation at the time.

A Governor reported that it is a worthwhile internal exercise to complete and cannot identify any outliers with the proposed grades.

A Governor reported that whilst it is best to see what happens with inspections, it is good for the Corporation to be thinking about the new judgements.

Karen Spencer reported that all reports presented in agenda items 5.1 – 5.10 will be combined into one self-assessment document which will be sense-checked against the judgements and go to Corporation for approval at its meeting on 18 December 2025.

The Standards and Curriculum Committee noted the report on leadership and governance – proposed self-assessment gradings.

## **6 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) 2024-2025 and 2025-2026**

The Standards and Curriculum Committee received and considered the report on KPIs for 2024-2025 and 2025-2026, presented by Becky Jones, Deputy Principal.

The KPIs were covered in agenda items 5.1 – 5.11 above.

The Standards and Curriculum Committee noted the final position of the KPIs for 2024-2025 and agreed that the proposed KPIs for 2025-2026 will be presented to Corporation for approval at its meeting on 18 December 2025.

## **7 Quality Improvement Plan 2024-2025 and 2025-2026**

The Standards and Curriculum Committee received and considered the report on the Quality Improvement Plan 2024-2025 and 2025-2026, presented by Becky Jones, Deputy Principal.

The Quality Improvement Plan was covered in agenda items 5.1 – 5.11 above.

The Standards and Curriculum Committee noted the final position of the Quality Improvement Plan 2024-2025 and 2025-2026.

## **8 Higher Education**

### **8.1 Higher Education Update and Quality Assurance Report**

The Standards and Curriculum Committee received and considered the Higher Education (HE) Update and Quality Assurance Report, presented by Becky Jones, Deputy Principal.

Becky Jones reported that the College is disappointed with not being able to recruit to some of its higher education programmes however it is hoped that a number of them will be viable to run in 2026-2027.

The Institute of Technology and collaboration with other colleges continues to work well.

It was disappointing that there was no mention of Access to Higher Education courses in the recently published White Paper and Karen Spencer highlighted that these programmes were always the main feeder for foundation programmes.

A Governor highlighted that higher education numbers are small and learner recruitment is a challenge and asked if there was a net cost to the College. Becky Jones confirmed that there is a cost to the College. A Governor highlighted the importance of having a higher education offer and to promote it as a progression route for learners. Karen Spencer highlighted that when student numbers were capped by Government, the College had good higher education numbers however when the controls were lifted, the College's numbers dropped significantly. Becky Jones reported that now for Early Years if learners already have a licence to practice, they do not need to complete the placement hours and this might help with recruitment onto this programme.

The Standards and Curriculum Committee noted the Higher Education Update and Quality Assurance Report.

### **8.2 OfS Reportable Events**

The Standards and Curriculum Committee noted that there has been no OfS reportable events since the Committee last met on 19 June 2025.

## **9 Attendance and Punctuality Policy and Procedures**

The Standards and Curriculum received and considered the Attendance and Punctuality Policy and Procedures, presented by Laura Wedgbury-Glew, Assistant Principal.

A Governor asked about the contact with parents when a student is not in class. Laura Wedgbury-Glew confirmed that an email goes out immediately to the student and parent and then staff follow up with a phone call.

The Standards and Curriculum Committee approved the Attendance and Punctuality Policy and Procedures.

**10 Any Other Business**

There were no items of any other business.

**11 Dates of Future Meetings**

Spring Term 2026	Thursday 12 March 2026	9.30am
Summer Term 2026	Thursday 18 June 2026	9.30am

**Key Points From The Meeting For Corporation:**

**1. Self-Assessment 2024-2025, including Key Performance Indicators 2024-2025**

To receive and approve the College’s Self-Assessment for 2024-2025.

**2. Key Performance Indicators 2025-2026**

To receive and approve the Key Performance Indicators for 2025-2026.