Students, Curriculum & Quality Committee

Tuesday 03 March 2026, 6:00-7:55pm
Block 1 Boardroom (1.204)

Halesowen College

Meeting papers link: 03 Mar 2026 (GovernorHub)

Committee members:
Sarah Dawson
Izzy Evans (Student governor)
Grant Johnson
Lynn Pass (Co-opted member)
Gail Rothnie (Committee Chair)
Anna Sutton (Vice Chair)

Officers in attendance:
Sarah Bullus, Assistant Principal
Jacquie Carman, Principal & CEO
Steph Morley, Director of Governance
Jon Priest, Chief Information Officer
Jo Williams, Deputy Principal/CEO

APPROVED MINUTES

Item	Discussion	Action
1	**Welcome and introductions** The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed all in attendance.	
2	**Procedural matters**	
2.1	Apologies Apologies were received and accepted from R. Marmeleiro and C. Tucker.	
2.2	Declarations of interest There were no declarations of interest for this meeting.	
2.3	Confidential item(s) There were no items to be held in Confidential session.	
2.4	Minutes of last meeting and actions/matters arising The Committee **approved** the minutes of the meeting held on 03 December 2025. Outstanding actions/matters arising: - Gap analysis/intersectionality: this had been addressed throughout the separate reports rather than via a general update - Ref 12, student-accessible IT: J. Priest reported there were approximately 2000 different digital devices across the college's campuses available to students. He agreed to send the full breakdown to G. Johnson	JP
	- Ref 14, Online safety audit (superseded): J. Priest advised the previous online safety audit had now been superseded by the DfE online safety checklist and Cyber Essentials criteria, both of which required more than the previous baseline minimum. He reported adherence was a requirement as part of the college's funding agreement and confirmed regular auditing of compliance took place – the most recent audit had confirmed full	SB

compliance. It was agreed online safety would be incorporated into the regular safeguarding report

The Committee was informed of the recently published KCSiE consultation draft, which proposed further changes in relation to online safety, and J. Carman confirmed managers were being briefed the following week on the proposed changes and their implications.

All other actions were reported as completed/closed.

2.5 Approvals since last meeting

There had been no approvals/decisions made since the last meeting.

3 Delivering the strategic plan

3.1 Quality improvement plan (QIP)

J. Williams presented the latest update on progress with delivering the milestones within the 2025/26 QIP and highlighted the following:

- Following Assessment Point 3 (AP3), work would take place with curriculum leaders to challenge their outcome predictions
- Leaders/managers were regularly working alongside the teaching staff to ensure action could be taken quickly where needed
- The latest estimate was an ALPS Grade 6. The target grade for this year was 5
- ESOL outcomes had improved following a change to the delivery method and format of the courses
- The proportion of students progressing from Grade 2 to 3 in GCSE Maths was acknowledged by the FE Commissioner's team. Grades had been graduated (3a, 3b & 3c) to demonstrate progress; however, this was not reflected in the data. Students who sat but did not achieve Grade 4 in November 2025 were being supported to identify and understand their individual areas for improvement
- The FEC's good practice guide was being used to inform practice and ways to better support students with EHCPs had been identified and put in place

The Committee asked how confident leaders were about the current increase to ALPS Grade 6 and the achievement of 5 by year-end. J. Williams spoke about the greater emphasis on moderation, use of past papers to provide realistic assessment, challenging predictions and submission of coursework, all of which provided the confidence in the projected current ALPS grade and at year-end.

The Committee asked what would be done if no improvement was seen. J. Williams advised ways to improve were always being explored. She spoke about how the learning from the first year of VESPA was already informing delivery for next year, as well as further visits to high-performing A Level centres, all of whom used VESPA. With GCSEs, the good practice guides were being reviewed in detail to identify further ideas for improvements.

The Committee referred to blank sections of the report relating to STEM and Humanities learning walks. J. Williams confirmed this was due to not being in receipt of all the associated returns at the time of the report's publication. She reported STEM result was approx. 60% of teaching staff demonstrating stretch and challenge, against a target of 75%' therefore, there was still work to do in this area.

The Committee noted the attendance rates for VESPA sessions and asked if work would continue to encourage attendance. J. Williams confirmed it would – involvement in VESPA was positive for A Level students; therefore, it was critical every student attended. She had recently received student feedback about inconsistent delivery methods, which she acknowledged could impact on attendance, and confirmed this would be addressed.

The Committee asked if the coursework completion measure was an indication of quality or submission. J. Williams advised the focus was currently on submission – monthly checks to ensure students had completed coursework as failure to submit could make a student ineligible to sit the final exams.

The Committee noted the milestone regarding A2 students receiving careers appointments had not been met. Although there had been cohort-wide events and session put in place, it was acknowledged the target regarding 1-1 appointments had not been achieved and would need to be a focus for the Summer term.

The Committee acknowledged the impact student growth could have on the capacity of student support services. J. Carman advised the college was able to absorb the impact for a limited time but there would be a point at which capacity needed to be reviewed, which was not helped by the lagged funding model for FE.

The Committee asked how the college tracked the destinations of A Level students who had not applied for university/apprenticeships. J. Priest advised the progression system would go live immediately after the February half term break and activity would be targeted on those students where an intended destination was not known. He explained how the answers provided by students in the system would open up different questions based on their answers, allowing triage of the information received by different college departments. The Committee noted the action that was planned to ensure engagement with these students and requested an update be provided at the next meeting. **SB**

The Committee **noted** the progress update provided.

3.2 Performance update

J. Priest presented the performance report, which provided narrative for the data and PowerBi dashboard, and highlighted the following:

- Retention across the college was generally above the same point over the previous two years, particularly for adults
- Analysis had shown socio-economic status was the main indicator for student attendance and retention
- J. Priest and J. Williams were meeting with subject leads to challenge predictions and ensure projected value-added scores were as accurate as they could be
- Applications for 2026/27 had shown further growth compared to this year, which even without the numbers for the new Construction courses represented a 12% growth

The Committee noted there were elements of the report where no comparison data had been provided. J. Priest explained, where this was the case, there had been no comparable assessments in previous years. The Committee asked when the next assessment round would take place – he reported it was about to happen and confirmed, due to the date of the Committee's next meeting, this data and associated analysis would be circulated separately once available. Data for A1 students would be reported following the Summer mock exams. **JP/JW**

The Committee asked if the Curriculum Directors were aware of governors' focus on predictions, accuracy and ultimately student outcomes – J. Williams confirmed they were.

The Committee noted the difference between predicted outcomes in Maths and Further Maths (A Level) and asked if the reasons for this were known. J. Williams advised the students studying Further Maths were generally high achievers and that different teachers taught the classes. She reported interventions had been put in place for Maths, the impact of which would be seen over the next 12 months.

The Committee asked if the reasons were known for where a subject's grade had decreased since the last report. J. Williams advised this had been identified through feedback that students had not been provided with sufficient past exam papers.

The Committee asked if similar application increases had been seen across the other colleges. J. Carman confirmed there had but noted Halesowen's growth reflected the college was accessing students from outside the immediate area. The Committee asked what action would be taken if the college could not accommodate all applications. Governors were informed applications would be closed and waiting lists put in place if required, as done for the new Electrical course starting in September 2026. J. Carman advised application deadlines had not historically been used as learners often would only engage with the college after receiving their results. She also spoke about how the marketing focus would change based on course capacity.

The Committee discussed how recent media activity had emphasised the value of learning trades, particularly given the concerns around AI replacing jobs, and the potential for the outcome of the curriculum and assessment review to increase the demand for apprenticeships.

The Committee **noted** the performance update provided.

3.3 Feedback from divisional performance reviews

J. Williams presented the report which provided feedback from the most recent round of divisional performance reviews (DPRs) undertaken throughout the college, including RAG ratings for 2024/25 performance, student voice, employer engagement, QIP 2024/25 and plans for 2025/26.

The Committee asked for the reasons behind the amber ratings in relation to the QIP. J. Williams explained the amber ratings related to ambitious attendance targets not being met. She advised improvement had been seen across many divisions but not all, in particular Resit English and Maths. She discussed the mitigating action being taken to address other areas with amber ratings, including exploring entry level courses and working with employers to create more placements for T Levels.

The Committee asked for feedback on the effectiveness of the DPR process. J. Carman reported the process was helping to instil accountability and change mindsets across middle leadership within the college. She explained this was also alongside regular training regarding the 'bigger picture', involvement in strategic planning and the LEAD management programme. She reported there was good practice in place and the challenge was to ensure consistency across all divisions.

The Committee **noted** the feedback provided.

3.4 Committee-allocated risks

J. Priest presented the risk dashboard and highlighted the risks allocated to the SCQC, in particular the following risks identified as still being outside the threshold and the mitigating action being taken:

- Uncertainty regarding the new Ofsted inspection framework
- Uncertainty regarding SEND reform
- Emerging technology and pace of change
- Retention of students
- Recruitment and retention of specialist practitioners
- Tracking and monitoring of student progress
- Complexity and volume of safeguarding referrals

The Committee asked if the inability to recruit and/or retain specialist staff could impact on student recruitment/retention and if the withdrawal of subjects was considered if affected by staffing. J. Carman agreed this could have an impact but advised subject withdrawal was not straightforward as there would be implications for linked A Level subjects and elements of some vocational qualifications.

The Committee **noted** the risks allocated to the SCQC, in particular those identified as high/outside the threshold, and the mitigating action being taken.

4 In-year updates: Students

4.1 Learner Voice (inc 'You said, we did')

J. Williams presented the report and explained a detailed 'You said, we did' update had been included as an appendix.

J. Priest referred to the discussion at the previous meeting about intersectionality and advised through this analysis Bangladeshi male students were more likely to have less positive perceptions of staff. The Committee welcomed the incorporation of intersectionality analysis and asked what would be done once an insight had been identified. J. Williams advised, in this instance, targeted work led by the Head of Inclusion would be delivered with both the students and staff.

The Committee acknowledged the results from the Learner Voice activity and noted that some of the issues raised were compounded by the pressures on the college estate due to growth, which would be resolved over time.

The Committee **noted** the report provided and emphasised the importance of receiving Learner Voice updates alongside the engagement sessions with students.

S. Morley informed the Committee a provisional date for the next student engagement session was 26/03/26 at 11:00am. She asked governors to confirm attendance and stated she would extend the request to the wider Corporation. The Committee welcomed a second engagement session with students and it was agreed the theme of the discussion would be student support in its widest sense. **SM**

4.2 Student governors' item

I. Evans referred to the feedback within the Learner Voice report and highlighted the security concerns raised by students at Shenstone House. It was confirmed the building did have an open reception; however, the doors from leading from the area were accessed controlled. In relation to increasing security presence, J. Carman reported security staffing was allocated based on learner volume across the different campuses but advised the college would respond to an identified need for additional security presence if this arose.

4.3 Attendance

J. Priest introduced the report, highlighting the slightly improved position compared to the same point the previous year and emphasising the importance of the Engagement & Support Officers (ESOs) introduced this year. He advised, in response to both the insights from the data and Learner Voice, the college had discussed concerns with the coach provider regarding missed stops and the impact on student attendance.

J. Williams referred to the impact of the ESOs' introduction to date and how they had been deployed across the college. She reported differences between how the ESOs had been used across the divisions had been identified and as a result the focus would be on going back to basics – focusing on students not in attendance, making contact and conducting home visits where required. She advised English & Maths would be prioritised in the first instance, alongside any specific identified areas of attendance concern.

The Committee **noted** the update provided and looked forward to seeing the impact of the ESOs' work after a full year in post.

4.4 Safeguarding and wellbeing

S. Bullus presented the latest safeguarding report and highlighted the continued increase in both volume and complexity of the concerns referred to the team.

The Committee asked if the reasons behind the increase in reported bullying were known. J. Williams advised the increase had been caused by disagreements on social media brought into the college environment.

The Committee requested more detail about the increase in identified drug and alcohol issues. S. Bullus advised this related to a cluster of students where substance misuse was normality.

The Committee discussed how increases in reported concerns could also reflect a culture of openness and trust.

The Committee acknowledged the importance of the recent communication sent out to staff regarding the situation in the Middle East, which referenced support available to both staff and students, and asked if the team was equipped to respond during these uncertain times. S. Bullus informed the Committee this had been discussed with the team earlier that day and that proactive action was being taken to ensure appropriate support could be provided.

The Committee **noted** the update provided and thanked the team for the continued support given to the college's students.

4.5 Inclusion – SEND review

J. Williams presented the report from the commissioned review of SEND earlier that year and highlighted the identified areas for improvement. She advised an action plan was in development in response to the identified areas.

J. Williams confirmed the SEND action plan and associated progress update would be presented to the SCQC at its next meeting. **JW**

The Committee **noted** the report of the SEND review, the action taken to date and the further improvement planned.

4.6 Careers and progression

S. Bullus presented the latest careers and progression report, and advised the action plan template from the Careers Strategy had been incorporated as requested as a means of reporting progress. She reported the team was working well to deliver the goals outlined in the Careers Strategy and associated action plan.

The Committee asked if there was interaction with the college's alumni. S. Bullus advised this had been a challenge historically and was an identified area for improvement. **GJ**

The Committee referred to the actions within the plan that referred to delivering an increase and suggested including the proportion achieved at the time of reporting would help explain the rationale for the RAG rating against that action. The Committee also noted some actions with %age increase targets did not make reference to baseline performance and requested these be included. **SB**

The Committee welcomed the 30% increase in university applications compared to the previous year and asked if this had been a sector-wide trend. J. Carman confirmed there had been an increase across the sector; however, the increase at was important in the context of the communities served by the college. She highlighted the value placed on the local university offer as a way of supporting students who would not be financially able to study away from home.

The Committee requested any links between the targeted work with students through the Elephant Access Group and applications to Russell Group/other top universities be included in future reports. **SB**

The Committee **noted** the update provided.

5 In-year updates: Curriculum & Quality

5.1 Learning, teaching and assessment

J. Williams presented the report and outlined the key points from the report in relation to quality assurance and improvement activities (including courses under notice and rapid improvement plans) and staff development.

The Committee **noted** the update provided and acknowledged the supportive feedback from staff re the observation process.

5.2 Apprenticeships

J. Carman presented the report and informed the Committee of the continued growth of the college's apprenticeship provision. She advised additional assessors had been recruited to address the demand and described the college's approach to growth as having integrity. She referred to the section of the report with the data from the DfE's new Apprenticeship Accountability Framework showing the college as on track for all performance measures.

The Committee noted the update provided and acknowledged the performance against the AAF measures as good evidence of the progress made against the recommendations from the college's last Ofsted inspection.

5.3 Subcontracting

There was currently no subcontracting in place.

5.4 College curriculum offer

J. Williams presented the report and outlined the challenging situation for FE colleges – planning for next year without knowing the outcome of the government's review of curriculum and assessment. She referred to the report, which she advised outlined what would happen in the event of qualifications being withdrawn in Digital Technology, Early Years, Health & Social Care and Science.

The Committee acknowledged the potential withdrawal of qualifications and its implications, and asked if the qualifications that the college would offer as an alternative had been tested with stakeholders. J. Williams confirmed discussions had already begun with local universities, which would continue, and work would take place with employers once more was known.

The Committee asked for further information about the reasons for students 'not willing/wanting to' access a T Level. J. Williams explained this would depend on the T Level subject, for example placements for Health were limited, the reluctance to specialise with Digital and academic requirements with Early Years.

The Committee noted the update provided and acknowledged the importance of knowing the outcome of the curriculum and assessment review at the earliest opportunity in order to finalise plans.

6 Any other business

There was no further business for discussion and the Chair closed the meeting at 7:55pm.

2025/26 meeting dates:

- ~~01 October 2025 (Actual outcomes 24/25)~~
- ~~03 December 2025 (SAR 24/25 & QIP 25/26)~~
- ~~03 Mar 2026 (Mid-year updates)~~
- 24 June 2026 (Predicted outcomes 25/26)

Actions from this meeting

Student, Curriculum & Quality Committee – 03 March 2026			
Ref	**Action**	**Owner**	**Date**
1	Send breakdown of student-accessible IT by email to GJ	JP	ASAP
2	Provide assurance at next meeting re engagement with A2 students and careers/destinations IAG	SB	Jun-26
3	Circulate data and analysis for the next assessment round to SCQC members	JW/JP	When available
4	Add details on GHub re next governance student engagement session	SM	06/03/26
5	Add online safety into the regular safeguarding report format	SB	Jun-26
6	Present SEND action plan and progress update at next meeting	JW	Jun-26
7	Share information re alumni contact with SB	GJ	Apr-26
8	Incorporate the feedback regarding progress reporting and baseline data in the Careers Strategy action plan	SB	Jun-26
9	Include any linkages between targeted action re top/Russell Group unis and actual applications	SB	Jun-26