

Minutes



Meeting	Quality and Standards Committee
Date	Tuesday 30 September 2025
Time	17:00-19:00
Venue	Google meet

Attendees:	Donna Clifford (Chair); Katie Asgari; Simon Ashton; Jason Austin; Fedora Igwe; Alan Srilachai; Ian Sutherland; Carol Stanfield; Louise Woodcock
In attendance:	Tracey Mace-Akroyd (Deputy Principal/CEO); Lucy Barnwell (Director of Learner Recruitment and Marketing); James Godsell (Director of Business Development and Apprenticeships); Cheryl Martin (Director of Quality and Academic Standards); Laura Reid (Director of Safeguarding and Student Support); Mark Ryan (Vice Principal Curriculum); Louise Turner (Director of Inclusive Curriculum); Dan Stanbra (VP Adult Education, Commercial and Partnership Strategy); Cath Mollart (Executive Director Strategic Planning and Corporate Services); Sarah Connerty (Director of Governance and minute taker)

		Action
1.	Welcome, Introductions and Apologies The Chair welcomed colleagues to the meeting, and welcomed Louise Turner, the Director of Inclusive Curriculum who has joined the Committee as an attendee. Apologies from Katie Asgari and the student governors did not attend the meeting.	
2.	Declarations of interest There were no declarations received.	
3.	Minutes of the meeting held on 10 June 2025 RESOLVED: The minutes from the meeting held on 10 June 2025 were agreed as a true and accurate record Written resolution – Admissions Policy – 23 June 2025 The written resolution was ratified.	
4.	Matters arising Most actions are completed or included on the agenda. ACTION 1 - the proportion of high needs learners in mainstream courses to be added into future reporting – the DCEO reported that this is being added into reporting going forward where appropriate, particularly for 16-18s, who fall under that funding category. The Director of Governance apologised for the incomplete set of Quality of Education reports for HE which have now been included with the Director of Quality and Academic Standards providing a verbal update.	
5.	Safeguarding and Prevent Annual Report <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Prevent Duty risk assessment/action plan 2. Safeguarding for All Policy 	

	<p>The Committee considered the report, Prevent action plan and Safeguarding for All Policy. The Head of Safeguarding and Student Support provided an overview of the safeguarding annual report, which includes information on vulnerable individuals, three-year trends, and trauma-informed approaches. There has been a successful completion of Keeping Children Safe in Education (KCSIE) by all staff. One governor asked about updates in the policy around intimate care, which are predominantly for high-need students, but also applies to those without Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs). One governor asked about CCTV development and the lockdown procedures that look very good and in line with the new Martyn's Law. The new system is more sophisticated for tracking and includes speakers for lockdown announcements and on-screen notifications. The lockdown drill will take place in the next half term.</p> <p>RESOLVED: The Committee recommended to approve the Safeguarding for All Policy to the Board</p>	
6.	<p>Equality, Diversity and Inclusion FREDIE Action Plan 2025-6</p> <p>The Head of Safeguarding and Student Support reported that the Action Plan is a working document based on feedback from the last Investors in Diversity re-accreditation and internal group needs. The Plan has not been changed for 2025-2026 for this meeting as it is within the cycle, and with Investors in Diversity assessors visiting on the 15-17 October. The link governors for Safeguarding and SEND, and EDI are scheduled to meet the assessors. The Chair asked about action 8 – take positive action to obtain the view of colleagues from underrepresented groups - due to recommence in September - and this is related to HR working to reengage staff interest after low participation last year which will be followed up for a progress report for the next meeting. The DCEO noted that the working group had worked hard to put together the Action Plan which had impressed the assessors by focusing on the Group's culture and learners, not just responding to feedback, indicating a strong, needs-based approach.</p>	
7.	<p>Applications and Enrolments 2025-6</p> <p>The Director of Learner Recruitment and Marketing provided an update on applications and enrolments, reporting 4,470 FE learners and a total of 4,523 for study programmes, exceeding the target of 4,500. The Group is still enrolling and monitoring learner numbers.</p> <p>Parent engagement has greatly improved, with strong attendance and participation at parents' evenings compared to last year. This increased involvement is helping support learners through their eight-week induction as they settle into the Group.</p> <p>One governor asked about progression to Higher Education, noting the previous year's focus on this area. There are positive HE numbers, with 301 degree learners and approximately 360 Apprenticeships, exceeding last year's figures of 232 against a target of 320. There will also be January enrolments. 157 learners have progressed in house. There have been various initiatives including the <i>My Time</i> campaign, social media efforts, and dedicated discussions with Level 3 year 2 learners. The Group is bucking the national trend and it has been a huge one team effort.</p> <p>The CEO asked the Board's HE link governor about growth in HE in the sector. It has been a year where HE is having to work hard for positive results, and each year increased work is required to attract learners and keep in touch to translate the offer to enrolment. Universities are targeting learners to keep their numbers up. The link governor noted that it is great to hear about learners in house progression.</p> <p>The Committee asked if the Group had experienced learners being encouraged to study elsewhere and to date this has not been evident with the Group remaining vigilant.</p>	

	<p>It was agreed that the Director of Learner Recruitment and Marketing and her team have done a lot of work to improve HE numbers, particularly progressing students in house, and there is an evident impact this year. The Director of Quality and Academic Standards noted that there has been a change of focus away from traditional HE with bespoke skills-based qualifications, a diversified curriculum and an intention to support progression opportunities for our learners. A lot of strategic thinking has taken place over the last 18 months around the HE and HLS offer to ensure it is right for our learners.</p>	
8.	<p>Risk Report including key Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) 2025/6</p> <p>Quality Improvement Plan The Director of Quality and Academic Standards provided an overview noting it is based on R12 data from August and predicted an overall amber rating, indicating actions are on target and achieving positive impact. For the end of the year there may be some movement on final performance. Most actions are on target and achieving a positive impact. There are improvements in English and Maths, staff retention and morale, GCSE achievements exceeding targets, and projected progress for high-needs, EHCP and Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) learners. Interventions implemented last year successfully addressed early concerns about achievement. One governor asked about the low English and Maths achievement in Level 1 provision at Dearne Valley College (DVC) and subcontracting. This is due to the higher proportions of Level 1 learners at DVC, particularly in Animal Care, along with small cohort numbers in subcontracting at Rotherham United.</p> <p>ACTION: It was agreed to add learner numbers to future reports for better context and an end of year update overview of numbers for all areas. There has been lots of positive traction in Animal Care at DVC with new personnel in place.</p> <p>There are expected improvements for the end of year actuals.</p> <p>The DCEO reported that she will be looking at the template for the QIPs during October half term to align it with the Ofsted framework. There is no expectation for the SAR to meet the new criteria this year, and the Group will focus on context, provision and where we sit under the new grading. This information will come to the November Committee.</p> <p>The DCEO provided an overview of the risk report, which starts with a summary of a wide range of positive developments since the start of term. The Committee thanked the DCEO for including the positive start and stories which is important to hear.</p> <p>There have been over 500 extra study programme learners this term and the teams' efforts despite being over capacity have been excellent. Key risks included overcapacity in construction, with learners being moved across campuses, and significant overcrowding in hair and beauty, necessitating the search for a commercial venue in town. The Council are on board to support this. There are plans to adapt a classroom at Rotherham College to facilitate the increase in welding learners with an additional seven welding bays. Additional general purpose classroom space is also needed, leading to challenging timetable adjustments and increased administrative work. ACTION: Staffing challenges continue due to recruitment difficulties and last-minute withdrawals, requiring reliance on agency staff in some areas including business, plumbing, motor vehicle and construction. New, teams in plumbing and aviation are receiving extensive support. The Committee asked for an update at the next meeting.</p> <p><i>Attend to Achieve</i> meetings started this week. Withdrawals are a lot lower than this time last year with curriculum leaders having a good view of their learners and putting intervention strategies in place. 894 3-year plans were written over the summer and continue to be rolled out. MIS and the Director of Business Development and Apprenticeships have been heavily involved in developing the new Navigate system.</p>	<p>Dir of Quality and Academic Standard</p>

	<p>Although there were some delays in learner sign-ups and negative feedback from employers, progress is now back on track.</p> <p>The Director of Inclusive Curriculum explained the new inclusive curriculum's project-based learning model at DVC and Idle Valley, designed for learners not yet ready for traditional education. This involves working with external professionals, a new team, and a term-by-term transition plan to vocational areas based on 3-year plans. There have been some early successes, with two learners transitioning quickly into vocational areas. The Chair asked about numbers and there are 60-64 learners across four groups, with a fluid intake and transition process. The program offers a Level 1 NOCN award and English and Math support, utilising outdoor spaces and addressing barriers to classroom learning. Training also takes place in the areas learners will move onto. The SEND link governor praised the flexible intake model, allowing learners to remain in project-based courses until ready to move to vocational areas, and the positive impact on addressing learner needs. The SEND link governor asked what happens if learners are not ready at week 10 or 11 to step into a vocational course. Learners can stay longer on the programme, as it is an intensive course the majority are expected to be ready for their next steps.</p> <p>New Ofsted framework</p> <p>The DCEO confirmed that the new Ofsted framework requires changes to how performance is presented, with plans to adjust QIP templates during October half term. She explained that while there's no expectation for the SAR to meet the new criteria, the Group needs to be prepared to discuss strengths, context, and areas for improvement if an inspection call comes. Inclusion is a separate grade and threads through all provision types. The Group anticipates a large proportion of its learners (up to 80%) will fall into the disadvantaged category under the new framework as it includes English and Maths. The Chair noted the change in terminology from leadership and management to leadership and governance, anticipating updated guidance for governors. The first inspections start on the 10 November 2025.</p> <p>The CEO noted that apprenticeships and Adult Skills Funding will remain on the agenda for Finance and Resources Committee as well as this Committee.</p> <p>The Group is on track to deliver sustained quality improvements across most headline priorities. Strengthened leadership, focused CPD, improved learner support systems and robust monitoring mechanisms are collectively driving up standards across the Group.</p> <p>A comprehensive mapping exercise will be undertaken once the renewed framework officially starts in November 2025. This mapping exercise for both the SAR and the QIP will compare the Group's current performance and evidence bases to the updated inspection criteria including the new inspection report card and the updated guidance.</p> <p>ACTION: A training session from the DCEO for governors on the new framework to be scheduled</p>	DCEO
9.	<p>Group data summary report 2024-25-year end (R12 predicted as final performance not confirmed until end Oct 2024 ILR return)</p> <p>The Committee noted the background data.</p>	
10.	<p>Quality of Education Reports (see full reports for further details)</p> <p>1. 16-18 (including High Needs)</p> <p>The VP Curriculum reported on key points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student satisfaction is strong • Retention is above 2023-4 by 3.2% at 91.66% excluding GCSE and Functional Skills • High needs retention is above 2023-4 by 3.08% at 98.38% 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Predicted achievements for the main programme are 87.99% (up by 5.02% on 2023-4) • High needs predicted achievements is 90.98% (compared to 83.51% in 2023-4). EHCP improvements are significant at 18.19% • Attendance rates for main programme excluding GCSEs and FS have increased by 1% at 87.87% for High Needs and 85.62% non-High Needs • Overall, there is a marked improvement for High Needs outcomes with the collaborative strategy to bring three campuses together, with clear focus and interventions for those at risk working effectively • There is a significant improvement with an additional 554 enrolments <p>The Committee reviewed the report and update from the VP Curriculum, and the following points were raised:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reviewing the E&M progress within the cohorts as well as the E&M report triangulates the data • The attendance report shows the Group still lags behind the national average. With the amount of good work being done what is behind this data? A lot is to do with the Group's inclusivity and life factors and the multiple barriers to attendance our learners face, including learners needed to work because of financial crisis and supporting households. The new teaching and learning strategy is about resilience, scaffolding, exciting progressive sessions and working with external experts and three-year plans <p>2. The DCEO noted the gaps many learners have from key stage 5 which increases as time goes on for learners not in full time education. The Group has 894 3-year plans in place with more to come, and expecting 100% attendance is unrealistic. Time is needed to shape the context to get the numbers and data right. In inspection there will be the opportunity to talk about our learners and the barriers they face and the work that is going on to support and improve the learner experience. The thematic learning walks are all about inclusion, what we are doing to support the learners to attend and what the teaching is like when they do attend. The headline is that the Group is better year on year and there are improvements.</p> <p>3. Adults (including detailed subcontracting)</p> <p>The VP Adult Education, Commercial and Partnership Strategy reported:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adult provision (including subcontracted) is Outstanding • Achievement outcomes are strong at 96.12% and subcontracted 19+ at 99.21% This is bolstered by non-accredited learning aims at QAR, and shows a positive 3-year trend • Retention is strong • Attendance is in line with previous years at 86%, with a small decline in Tailored Learning • Teaching and Learning is a good quality • Learners report significant satisfaction and enjoy their time with us • There are exciting developments with a new logistics hub at Rawmarsh Road where learners are learning how to operate forklift trucks and being taught by specialists. There is significant hands-on experience with learners joining from the Job Centre. Governors are welcome to come along to see the new facilities • There is increased scrutiny by SYMCA and EMCCA who are now monitoring the Adult Skills Fund (ASF) allocation monthly rather than annually, with the possibility of clawback if recruitment profiles are not met. The team are delivering successfully year on year, but it is harder to respond and be flexible with a monthly review. The Committee noted this new risk, which is being mitigated and monitored and will be raised at the upcoming Finance and Resources Committee 	
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- One governor emphasised the importance of improving consistency in tracking destinations, outcomes and sustained destinations for adult learners as a key metric. There is further work to improve consistency in outcomes, and progress reports will come back to the Committee. There is a Business Intelligence Team who have tools to capture destinations for adult learners. The Group are in the top 10% for ESOL in the country but it is what happens to improve a learners' next steps because of that achievement.

4. Apprentices

The Director of Business Development and Apprenticeships reported:

- a significant improvement in apprenticeship achievement rates, with a projected 19.3% increase over three years
- the key priorities for the upcoming quarter include ensuring a smooth enrolment process despite a new CRM system causing some delays, and improving attendance, which dropped last year due to functional skills attendance from 19+ learners
- Apprenticeships are now above attendance levels from two years ago and the team are implementing a new intervention and disciplinary policy to reiterate the high expectations for apprentices and employers
- a 10% rise in employer satisfaction based on surveys with a significantly increased sample size, indicating greater engagement and positive responses. Learner surveys also showed strong relationships with work-based tutors, with 93% of respondents reporting a good relationship
- areas for improvement, in particular 16-18 achievement rates due to historical withdrawals on longer programs
- there are plans for parents' evenings and targeted interventions, including enhanced pastoral support

5. HE

The Director of Quality and Academic Standards reported:

- The Group is experiencing strong HE performance, with retention, attendance and predicted achievement on traditional HE programmes improving year on year
- The Group will improve on position but not as much as R12 data is predicting as seven won't achieve
- There is good progress in the Access and Participation Plan (APP) which was submitted well in advance of deadline. Queries have been responded to, and the Group is awaiting confirmation for the Plan which comes into force 2026-7. A task and finish group is being set up to look at the objectives in the Plan
- The NSS results are strong, with blips in two categories which are being followed up. These are resources and how well communicated mental health and well being support is. This was a positive area in focus groups and in the APP work, so it does need unpicking. The link governor for HE suggested internal surveys which mirror the language in the NSS survey so learners are clear on what they are responding to and can see a common language. Reinforcing the work the Group is doing against what learners are asking for is key and any opportunities to reinforce this should be taken. The Director of Quality and Academic Standards noted that the induction survey has already been circulated, so these ideas will be taken forward in the exit survey to learners
- There is much improved marketing of HE, which hand in hand with hard work from colleagues has brought a revised curriculum offer and the majority of delivery is in non-traditional HE provision
- The Group is on track for 349 learners and is continuing to enrol, with teacher ed in year enrolments. There will be further discussions at the 13 October HE and HLS group

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is good progression on the Condition E6 harassment and sexual misconduct requirements from the Office for Students with a task and finish group reviewing and online training purchased for all staff and all HE students which is over and above the legislation. This work will be completed by October half term. <p>6. English & Maths (including English and Maths Strategy)</p> <p>The VP Adult Education, Commercial and Partnership Strategy reported that the E&M Task and Finish Group had discussed the English and Maths Strategy and Policy at its meeting last week and it was well received with no recommended changes. ACTION: A further paragraph about the Ofsted context will be added in when drafted.</p> <p>RESOLVED: The Committee agreed to approve the E&M Strategy and Policy with an additional paragraph about the Ofsted context to be added and circulated later.</p> <p>One governor asked about the November reset for grade three learners, and the research about early attempts versus delivery time, and the balance between achievement and giving learners the time to learn. The DCEO clarified that the focus is on demonstrating incremental progress, especially for disadvantaged learners, to prove value added. The VP Adult Education, Commercial and Partnership Strategy reported that the Group is not significantly below the norm for local providers and nationally, and there is a challenge to capture achievements from all learners who may have other commitments in the exam period or not be onsite during exams. Due to the surge in learner numbers to 440 at Rotherham College it is not viable to explore this year but will be raised for future years as a possibility. It was noted that giving learners a longer time to improve and show progress is a positive step for this year.</p> <p>The DCEO explained that under new framework, incremental progress is the key metric. Accurately recording a learners' starting point and developing their skills and knowledge over time is a priority. A lot of work has been done on moving learners up within a grade and adding value.</p>	VP Curriculum/ VP Adult Education
11.	<p>Quality Arrangements Cycle FE&HE 2025/26</p> <p>The Director of Quality and Academic Standards confirmed that the Group is continuing with self-assessment and quality improvement planning under the current education inspection framework, with plans to conduct a mapping exercise once the renewed framework is fully agreed upon. The DCEO reported that class visits for every teacher between now and Christmas to focus on sequencing and inclusion and influence training and CPD from the quality team has been arranged. Deep dives will not take place during this time. ACTION: A schedule will be provided for governors to participate and there will be lots of opportunities after October half term to join walks.</p>	Dir of Gov/ DCEO
12.	<p>T Level Report</p> <p>The VP Curriculum reported positive T-level outcomes for 2024-25, including increased offerings in Engineering, Animal Care, and Construction, with attendance significantly higher than non-T-level programs (by 5%). Pass rates for completing students were 91%, and student destinations were highly positive, with many progressing to apprenticeships with employers, including those who did not achieve. There have been challenges with placements in Construction and Engineering and a successful collaboration with AOC for T-level training. There are national trends of reduced engineering numbers and employers preferring technical qualifications over the full T-level. The DfE withdrawal of Onsite construction T Level has been addressed through alternative curriculum offers. Areas of concern are underperformance in Health at Rotherham College, and a variation in attendance across subjects with lower rates in Engineering and Business.</p>	
13.	<p>Employer Engagement Report</p>	

	<p>The Director of Business Development and Apprenticeships detailed a forecasted rise of £400k in apprenticeship income this year, projecting a total increase of £1.1 million over three years. This is partly due to the launch of higher apprenticeships.</p> <p>New employer academies with the Chamber of Commerce, NHS, and Everlast Gyms are set up. There is a focus on power skills and providing discounted gym memberships for students, talks for apprenticeships, and videos on nutrition.</p> <p>The NHS has committed to more T Levels.</p> <p>The team has successfully re-engaged 28 out of 38 apprentices from a withdrawn JTL contract, safeguarding approximately £250,000 in funding. Employer partnerships will take a lead on generating supported internships for learners and ensure supportive employers to prepare interns for the world of work. This will also ensure meeting the Group's strategic goal to move supported internships into supported apprenticeships.</p> <p>The Chair asked about power skills, and the Director of Learner Recruitment and Marketing explained that the term is a rebranding of soft skills, focusing on essential transferable skills like communication, problem-solving, and resilience which many Gen Z learners don't have. Learners can achieve skills for employment digital certificates to show future employers. The VP Adult Education, Commercial and Partnership Strategy reported that other skills providers like the semantic change and stakeholders associate the term with the Group which has been really positive. The CEO agreed and has been using at external briefings.</p>	
14.	<p>Compliments and Complaints</p> <p>1. Summary of Complaints 2024-25</p> <p>The ED Strategic Planning and Corporate Services presented the compliments and complaints report, noting that the volume of complaints has remained stable over the past three to four years, with most appeals not upheld. English and Maths saw the biggest increase in complaints, mainly concerning access arrangements. The team view complaints as an opportunity to improve services and outcomes such as professional conduct and complaints handling training, and monthly reports to campus directors for focused action are in place. The staff governor and lead for Information Compliance clarified that the 51 staff complaints do not represent individual staff members but rather multiple complaints, some of which are about agency staff, and that issues are quickly addressed by curriculum. To contextualise the level of complaints the Group had 15348 enrolments last year. There is assurance that the Group can manage complaints effectively, and where required actions are always implemented. There is the opportunity to complement as well as complain.</p>	
15.	<p>Policies</p> <p>Covered in the agenda:</p> <p>Safeguarding for All Policy (item 5)</p>	
16.	<p>Governor links/link governor feedback</p> <p>The Chair requested a plan for governor visits to ensure visibility and proactive engagement. The DCEO confirmed that a schedule of class visits and a crib sheet video will be shared with governors to aid their observations.</p> <p>One governor asked about the review of the link governor scheme, and this is coming to the Search, Governance and Remuneration Committee tomorrow with a full review expected.</p> <p>The Director of Quality and Academic Standards offered governors the opportunity to attend CPD sessions to gain insight into staff training and development.</p>	Dir of Gov

	<p>ACTION: the Director of Governance to share opportunities for governors to come into the colleges.</p> <p>ACTION: The Committee discussed the proposal for a separate link governor for inclusion, distinct from safeguarding and EDI, to ensure comprehensive oversight and this will be taken to the Search, Governance and Remuneration Committee.</p>	<p>Chair/Dir of Gov</p> <p>Dir of Gov</p>
17.	<p>Any other items</p> <p>A reminder that Quality and Standards Committee are welcome to attend the SAR Scrutiny Panel on the 4 November at 15.00.</p> <p>The Chair passed on thanks to the Exec and SLT for the papers, contributions and keeping governors up to date and to colleagues for attending the meeting.</p>	Cttee
18.	<p>Date of next meetings:</p> <p>Tuesday 25 November 2025</p> <p>Tuesday 10 March 2026</p> <p>Tuesday 16 June 2026</p> <p>All 17.00 start</p>	

Updates from the 2025-6 cycle of business:

FREDIE policy 2024-7 –will come to the Committee after the Investors in Diversity reaccreditation.

Curriculum strategy – a substantive item on the Board strategy day 23 September 2025.

Feedback and Complaints Policy and Procedure – this is a Group approved policy updated in March 2025.

Meeting closed: 18.56