



MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE ESHER SIXTH FORM COLLEGE ACADEMY TRUSTEES

PART 1

Thursday 11th December 2025 at 6.00pm

Present:

Oliver Schuster, Chair
Dan Hards, Principal
Emma O'Brien (EOB)
Flora Burrowes (FBU)
John Thater (JTH)
Natasha Meade (NME)

Jane Duscherer (JDU)
Alex Davy (ADA)
Claire Douglas (CDO)

David Lavarack, (Member), Brian Scott, (Member)
Sagar Patel, Deputy Principal, (Advising Officer), Kate Parsons, Assistant Principal (Advising Officer), Anna Mawson, Assistant Principal (Advising Officer).
Stephanie Wiles, Director of Finance and Estates, (Advising Officer)
Catherine Davies (Clerk)

1. REGISTER OF INTERESTS

There were no declarations of business interest.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Mark Nelligan, Tom Clark, Sophie Cook, Liz Gilroy-Scott, Thea Torosyan and Mark Aulds.

3. CONSTITUTION

3.1 Parent Trustee

The Chair thanked Dave Roberts for his service as Parent Trustee.
Alexander Davy was welcomed to the Board as a Parent Trustee elected by the Parents/Carers on 15th November 2025.

3.2 Recruitment of External Trustees

Applications have been received for the role, and an interview process will take place in the New Year.

3.3 Review of Committee Terms of Reference

The Board approved the Terms of Reference for the Audit Committee noting the changes to the makeup of the Committee and Item 32 regarding Severance pay.

The Board approved the Terms of Reference for the Recruitment Committee noting the update to the makeup of the Committee and inclusion of a Member if the Members agree.

3.4 Committee Membership and Chairs

The Board approved the updated Committee Membership and Chairs 2025/26.

3.5 Extending the number of External Trustees

The Board agreed to support the action to extend the total number of Trustees to 17 which may require the adoption of the 2021 model Articles of Association.

Action: Terms of Reference for Recruitment Committee to be reviewed at Members AGM.

Action: Legal counsel to be sought regarding extending the number of Trustees to 17.

4. MINUTES OF THE ACADEMY TRUST MEETING HELD ON 24th SEPTEMBER 2025

The Board approved the Minutes of the Board of Trustees meeting of 24th September 2025.

5. MATTERS ARISING

There were actions arising from the last meeting:

AT01-001 All Trustees and Members will be asked to complete Safeguarding Training via the TES portal. **The Clerk confirmed all Trustees and Members had completed the training.**

AT01-002 The Chair asked that the Special Committee Terms of Reference be added to the Agenda of the upcoming Strategy and Policy Committee for further consideration. **The Clerk confirmed this will be updated as part of a Student Cause for Concern review at the next Strategy and Policy Committee meeting.**

AT01-003 The Chair asked that the Standing Orders be added to the Agenda of the upcoming Strategy and Policy Committee for further consideration. **The Clerk confirmed this will be updated following amendments to the Articles of Association.**

AT01-004 Clerk to contact SFCA to take up this opportunity. **The Chair thanked everyone who had participated in the survey.**

6. PRINCIPAL'S REPORT

The Principal briefed the Board on the following:

- Re Industrial Relations and Pay – the pay award (4%) has been agreed for teaching and support staff. Changes to the “red book” (working conditions for teachers) are being negotiated, changes to the “lilac book” (working conditions for support staff) have been agreed with the changes due to be released soon for action in January.
- Post 16 Reform – The introduction of V levels from 2030 will lead to the defunding of some Btecs and AAQ's from 2027; this will include Btecs in Health and Social Care and Applied Science. The SFCA is working to ensure student choice is protected.

6.1 New Ofsted Framework

The Principal introduced the new Ofsted Framework. Ofsted is inspecting under the new framework and the SFCA have a webinar in January to impart more information. The new framework is reflected in the Self-Assessment Review and QIP and the SLT are moving forward with priorities for the College.

The Chair asked for confirmation of when the next inspection will take place and the Principal replied from September 2026, although clarification of the regularity of inspections will be sought.

The Principal continued that Link Trustees will be key to ensuring the Board has focus on inspection areas and new Link Trustee roles will be bought in for example SEN and Teaching and Learning. Performance Data will be presented at the Q&S Committee in April. The meaning of Inclusion and removing barriers to learning are key considerations for the Board too.

To ease communication, going forward college email accounts will be given to all Trustees which will give access to Teams and lanyards will be issued.

A Trustee (JDU) asked if the acronyms could be defined and the Principal replied that access to Teams will help with giving easy access to reference material provided at the induction. The Board discussed opportunities to visit the College including drama productions, careers fairs, Department Joint Reviews and Cross College Reviews.

6.2 Student Union Presentation

The President of the Student Union (FBU) gave a presentation outlining the achievements of the SU since July including:

- Summer Festival raised over £750 for ECAT
- The Freshers Fair and the pizza and ping pong event involved new students getting to know each other
- A silent disco for Black History month, a Halloween week skeleton hide and seek and Christmas pyjama day were all successful.
- A social media Student Union account has many followers and good engagement.
- A 6.1 student has organised a Food Committee to provide feedback regarding the catering.

The Chair thanked FBU for the excellent presentation.

6.3 Finance Reports – August and October

The Director of Finance and Estates briefed the Board on the management accounts, cashflow forecasts and reports for the periods to the end of August and the end of October. The Director highlighted the EBITDA (Earnings before Interest, Tax, Depreciation and Amortisation) at 31st August was positive and met all the objectives.

The October accounts reflect receipt of the National Insurance award but not the processing of the pay award. HMRC are investigating a recent VAT return which has affected the cash flow column.

The Board approved the Management Accounts and Reports.

7. REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE PERIOD ENDED 31 AUGUST 2025 AND LETTER OF REPRESENTATION TOGETHER WITH THE POST AUDIT REPORT AND AUDIT COMMITTEE INTERNAL SCRUTINY REPORT

The Director of Finance and Estates introduced this item noting that the Audit Committee and the Finance and Estates Committee had seen these documents and recommended them to the Board. Comments made by the Chairs of the Audit and Finance & Estates

Committees and Chair of the Board have been actioned by the auditor. Regarding the level of reserves, the Director noted that now the new classroom block has been built, the auditors have reflected the new level of reserves.

The Post Audit report did not raise any points regarding the finances or finance system; going forward Trustees are reminded to inform the Clerk if they have a change of interest during the year.

Report and Financial Statements – The Board approved the Report and Financial Statements.

Post Audit Report and Letter of Representation – The Board approved the Letter of Representation.

Audit Committee Internal Scrutiny Report – The Board noted the Audit Committee Internal Scrutiny Report.

The Chair thanked the Director of Finance and Estates and her team for their work.

8. COLLEGE SELF-ASSESSMENT REPORT 2024-25

The Deputy Principal introduced the College Self-Assessment Report, which has been re-written to reflect the new Ofsted Framework. The Report grades the College as Strong in the 5 judgement areas and the challenges are to document evidence to back this up and show Inclusion is woven through all areas of the College.

Inclusion:

The Deputy Principal highlighted that in terms of all learners (and SEN learners) the value added is well above the national average (top 15% for Schools and Sixth Form Colleges). The number of disadvantaged students is small and they achieve a positive value added score but it's a small percentage below their peers so this is an area of focus for the SLT.

Leadership & Governance:

Challenge provided by the Board was noted and the greatest evidence to show that Leadership and Governance is strong is the outcomes for Students.

Curriculum, Teaching & Training:

The College's teaching strategy is built on Quality First Teaching and staff are constantly asked "what are we doing to support our learners to become curious, independent and resilient learners." The 5 key points of Quality First Teaching were reflected in the Department Joint Reviews that Trustees attended in October.

Achievement:

This judgement area shows strong data and the College is pleased with the strengthening of vocational outcomes. The Board reviewed the HESA data and congratulated the SLT on the excellent success of students in Higher Education.

Participation & Development:

The Deputy Principal highlighted the exceptional and inclusive enrichment programme with all students selecting Extension studies in 6.1 and 6.2.

Quality Improvement Plan 2025-26

The Board reviewed the QIP that has been re-written to incorporate the new Ofsted framework judgement areas.

Target 1 – Inclusion – An Inclusion strategy will be implemented, and key data will be improved to draw out the performance of students from disadvantaged backgrounds

Target 5 – AI strategy in line with DfE guidance – A working group of teachers is proactively informing students about the use of AI and setting assessments using it.

A Trustee (FBU) asked for more information regarding how teachers know if a student has used AI in their work and Anna Mawson replied that a teacher can't know but can look at the quality of the work to see if they think it was written by the student.

Target 6 – Communications Policy – this is being drawn up to give parents, staff and stakeholders guidelines in terms of communication.

Target 11 – To achieve a pass rate at A Level of 99% or above.

Target 12 – To achieve an A Level high grade rate of over 61%.

The Board thanked the Deputy Principal and the SLT for the extensive amount of work that has gone into re-writing the QIP to reflect the new Ofsted framework.

The Board approved the QIP 2025/26.

9 REPORT BACK FROM COMMITTEES:

Strategy and Policy

The Chair briefed the Board that the Committee is considering changes to the Admissions Policy 2027. The Trustee Day will take place on 26th February and the presentation at the March board meeting will be from the Additional Learning Needs Department.

Audit

The Director of Finance & Estates gave an update regarding the external and internal audit reports and the introduction by the new internal auditor which included an overview of the areas they will review in the coming year.

Finance and Estates

The Vice Chair of the Committee gave an update regarding the Community Fund and how the profile/contributions could be raised. The Committee also considered the high demand for places at the College v the declining birth rate and how costs could be controlled in the long term if the demand for places dropped. The Caretaker has moved into the renovated cottage and the CIF bid is about to be submitted. The Committee agreed with the SLT decision to remove the temporary classrooms from the site.

Quality and Standards

The Chair of the Committee noted that the SAR and QIP were reviewed at the meeting and have been covered in Item 8 of this Agenda.

Action: Trustees to attend the Trustee Day on Thursday 26th February 2026.

10. LINK TRUSTEE REPORT

Kate Parsons updated the Board that the Link Trustees for Safeguarding and EDI had met on Teams and are planning to review the School Central Register.

The Career Progression Link Trustee updated the Board as follows:

- A combined higher education and apprenticeship day is taking place on 19th March 2026.
- Over 1000 UCAS forms have been submitted this term.
- Work continues to achieve the Quality in Careers Standard award.

11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

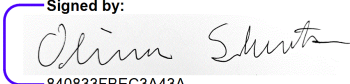
None.

12. WHAT ARE THE THREE THINGS WE HAVE DONE IN THIS MEETING THAT HAVE MADE A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION TO THE COLLEGE?

- Approved the accounts
- Approve the SAR and QIP
- Gained knowledge of the work of the Student Union via the excellent presentation.

13. DATE OF NEXT MEETING - Wednesday 26th March 2025 at 6.00pm

*The meeting closed at 7.35pm
Attendance was 60%*

Signed by:

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14 April 2026 | 3:53 PM BST

Signed and date

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

AT2 - 001	Terms of Reference for Recruitment Committee to be reviewed at Members AGM.
AT2 - 002	Legal counsel to be sought regarding extending the number of Trustees to 17.
AT2-003	Trustees to attend the Trustee Day on Thursday 26 th February 2026.