

MINUTES OF THE RICHARD HUISH COLLEGE GOVERNING BODY MEETING

Monday 30th March 2026 at 5.30pm
The Redwood Suite, Richard Huish College

Present: College Governing Body Members:

Richard Hatcher - Chair
Ian Brown – Vice Chair
David Snell – Community Governor
Alice Bridle – Community Governor
Anna Gabriel – Community Governor
Richard Wood – Community Governor
Johanna Marks – Community Governor
Shelagh Pritchard – Community Governor
Tom Torjussen – Staff Governor
Hannah Curtis – Staff Governor

Senior Leadership Team:

Laurie Morgan – Vice Principal of Curriculum and Quality
Becky Flower – Vice Principal Student Support

Clerk:

Hannah Clunie

Apologies: Emma Fielding, Ella Culshaw

Not present: Michael Wilson

In attendance: David Irving, History Course Manager and AI Lead

John Abbott, RHT Chief Executive Officer
Richard Jones, Career, Exams and Learning Centre Manager
Milly Tinson, Student Executive
Alex Gratwick, Student Executive

Items marked with * had a paper previously circulated.

Item marked with + was a verbal update and/or presentation.

Pre-meeting with Richard Huish Trust Chief Executive Officer, John Abbott

The CEO updated governors on the recent safeguarding incident that took place at the college and outlined the steps being taken in response. An external safeguarding review has been commissioned to identify strengths of provision and identify any learning and recommend areas for improvement.

A governor asked about the extent of public sharing of information, noting that some details appeared to have circulated within other schools.

The CEO confirmed that no detailed information had been shared publicly. They noted that when there is limited official information available, people can sometimes fill in gaps with speculation.

A staff governor added that staff were provided with agreed-upon wording to use with students to ensure that no unnecessary or inappropriate information was shared.

A governor queried the role of social media and the press, and whether staff and students were adequately supported.

The CEO reported that interactions with the press were straightforward. Students involved were fully supported, and any concerning content appearing on social media was monitored and blocked where necessary to protect those affected.

John Abbott left the meeting at 17:48.

SECTION 1 – ROUTINE AND STANDING ITEMS

1.1 Welcome and apologies

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies accepted from the Principal and Ella Culshaw. The meeting was quorate.

1.2 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest in connection with items on the agenda.

1.3 Minutes of the previous meeting held on 12th January 2026*

The minutes of the meeting were approved as a true and accurate record. The Chair consented for electronic signature.

1.4 Matters Arising*

Governors noted the report. As the Principal was not present, it was agreed that two of these items would be postponed until the May meeting.

SECTION 2 – STRATEGIC COMPLIANCE OVERVIEW

2.1 Student Executive Update+

Student Executives spoke to governors about events that the Student Executive have organised, which included:

- Spring Formal
- Action Research
- Citizens UK – this included working with Year 5 pupils from Lyngford Park Primary School
- Student Forum
- Faith Group - working on arranging a Faith Room at the College

Students advised that there was a planned new structure for the Student Executive that would be in place from Sept 2026.

Governors were advised that the process had started to recruit two new Associate (Student) Governors.

Governors thanked the Student Executive for the update and all their hard work.

Student Executives left the meeting at 17.57pm.

2.2 Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) Update – Artificial Intelligence (AI)*

Governors noted the report.

David Irving talked through his report and spoke to governors about the implementation of AI across the College. He outlined plans to integrate AI more effectively into the pastoral curriculum next academic year, ensuring compliance and upskilling staff to support appropriate use.

A governor questioned the use of 'Turn it in' and whether it was working well.

David confirmed that Turn it in continues to be used primarily as a plagiarism checker. He reported that when more than 20% of a submission is generated by AI, Turn it in can identify this with high accuracy whilst minimising false positives. He noted ongoing challenges around student understanding of some tools, such as Grammarly, and the importance of clear guidance. David also highlighted the evolving nature of AI detection and the continued reliance on teacher's professional judgement.

A governor asked why ChatGPT was not used in the College.

David advised that ChatGPT requires users to be 18+, whereas Copilot is appropriate from 13+.

A governor questioned how the College are measuring the success of AI implementation in comparison to other Sixth Forms.

David reported that the College have recently achieved AI Ed Explorer level certification and are one of the first Colleges to achieve this.

Governors asked staff governors if staff were finding it useful.

Staff governors advised that it is useful for simple tasks and providing further clarity with regards to communication, particularly when emailing students. So far, it's less helpful for creative tasks and still requires a human element. Staff were currently trialling the use of AI for marking.

A governor asked how students who choose not to use AI are supported.

David acknowledged the challenge of ensuring balance if some staff use AI generated feedback. Governors discussed and emphasised the accessibility tools for all learners and ensuring inclusivity.

Governors also raised concerns around digital poverty. David confirmed that bursary students can access laptops where needed and that generally this is not an issue. Course specific resources are provided where possible, and Copilot is available to all students. Whilst some students living in rural areas occasionally experience connectivity issues, computers are accessible in College study spaces and the College provides support where possible.

Governors discussed the value of visiting the College to speak directly with staff and students. The Chair thanked David for attending and his detailed report.

David Irving left the meeting at 18.16pm.

2.3 Destinations Report*

Richard Jones joined the meeting.

Governors noted the report.

Richard Jones advised governors that university numbers have increased, as has the number of students choosing gap years. It was noted that apprenticeships remain challenging to secure, though they provide a strong alternative to higher education.

A governor observed similarities with last year's data and requested that year-on-year comparisons be included in future reports.

A governor asked about low social mobility in Somerset and how the College encourages students to consider universities further afield.

Richard advised that financial constraints are a significant barrier for some students, as well as the prospect of moving further away from home. The College continues to encourage broader consideration and have recently held talks with parents. However, high-achieving students still often prefer more local options. Despite this, the College will continue to promote further aspirations.

A governor commented on the quality of the report and requested the current number of disadvantaged students.

Governors were advised that the College is reviewing how disadvantage is defined within the Richard Huish College context to ensure that categorisation is meaningful and supports effective tracking. Governors discussed the implications of the White Paper and new Ofsted framework, noting the importance of consistent data and maintaining a clear focus on disadvantaged cohorts. The aim is to move towards a more targeted approach rather than a blanket offer.

Governors discussed the limited availability of apprenticeships, noting reductions in funding and the limited opportunities in Somerset due to the employer landscape. Many local apprenticeships are in manual sectors and may not be suited to all students, while higher-level apprenticeships remain highly competitive. Governors were advised that an apprenticeship event was due to take place at the College.

Governors thanked Richard for attending.

Richard Jones left the meeting at 18.38pm.

2.4 Headline Data*

- Attendance, Census Date Numbers, Retention

Governors noted the report.

Vocational Results*

Governors noted the report.

Governors discussed the Alternative Academic Qualification's (AAQs) and the challenges students had experienced with this qualification. It was acknowledged that further consideration is needed regarding the suitability of AAQs for future cohorts and how best to support students who choose this pathway.

College Monitoring Points (2 & 6) – to be presented in meeting+

The Vice Principal of Curriculum and Quality presented an update to governors.

The majority of Year 2 students sat their mock exams in March. Governors were shown a comparison of this year's projected grades alongside the 2024/25 exam results and the March 2025 projections.

Overall, projections across all subjects were broadly in line with the previous year. Where any concerns had been identified, these would be explored further by the Senior Leadership Team and discussed in more detail during the Quality Committee.

Governors commented positively on the data and thanked the Vice Principal of Curriculum and Quality for the presentation and report.

2.5 Apprenticeships Update+

The Vice Principal advised governors that the accountancy apprenticeship provision would not be continuing.

This decision was made due to a sustained decline in numbers over recent years, which was partly a consequence of a long-standing member of staff retiring, resulting in the termination of the level 7 programme. Although the provision had reduced, the administrative burden remained high. With projected growth in the 16-19 provision, particularly in relation to space and administrative resource, the College had made the difficult decision to discontinue accountancy apprenticeships.

Governors were advised that current students on the course would continue until completion.

Governors questioned whether this provision might transition into a T Level in future years. It was advised that this was something the College may consider at a later stage.

A governor asked if any prospective learners for the next academic year were likely to be disappointed that this course was no longer being offered.

The Vice Principal advised that the timing of the decision allowed the College to provide appropriate guidance to applicants, ensuring they could make informed choices. No applications for this course had been received for the next academic year.

2.6 Citizens UK+

The Vice Principal of Student Experience updated governors that the College had joined Citizens UK this year. On the 23rd April the College are hosting the Refounding Assembly, with all partner institutions attending. The event will provide an opportunity for organisations to engage with students on issues that matter to them.

SECTION 3 – FINANCE

3.1 Finance Committee Summary

- Finance Committee Minutes 24.11.25* (*information only*)

Governors noted the minutes.

- Bursary Update+

The Vice Principal of Student Experience provided an update on the bursary allocation, funded by the government. From next year, bursary support will unfortunately only be available to families with a household income of £30,000 or less (reduced from £60,000). The College felt it was necessary to prioritise support for families with the lowest incomes.

The College has also applied for additional funding through the Bishop Fox's Foundation to support more students.

The Huish travel bursary will also move to a means-tested model (previously it was available to all students). The aim is to focus support on those who need it most.

The College continues to engage in support around travel fares, including conversations with local MPs.

It is not yet known whether these changes will impact the September 2026 intake.

A governor asked how the new bursary offer compares with other Colleges.

Governors were advised that Colleges in other areas offer child fares for students whilst travel costs remain a significant issue across Somerset. The changes carry some risk, but the College must operate with the available funds. The new arrangements are consistent with those offered by comparable institutions.

Governors requested to be kept up to date and for the bursary bandings to be circulated.

SECTION 4 – GOVERNANCE

4.1 Governance Update*

Governors noted the report.

A governor raised a query regarding the White Paper requirement that every school will be expected to monitor pupil belonging.

It was noted that the college sits in a “grey area”, as the guidance is primarily aimed at schools. The College currently engages students in discussions around enrichment and wider involvement, but further consideration is needed around how belonging should be measured in a post-16 context and what this might look like for future reporting.

4.2 Safeguarding Update*

Governors noted the report.

The Vice Chair advised the Trust have appointed a Trust-wide Safeguarding Lead.

Governors were encouraged to complete the termly safeguarding quiz.

SECTION 5 – OTHER MATTERS

5.1 RHC Expansion Project Bid Overview*

Governors noted the report.

Governors confirmed their support for the bid.

5.2 Quality & Finance Committee Membership+

Governors were encouraged to join the committees.

5.3 Any Other Business

The Clerk advised that it was Associate (Student) Governor, Ella Culshaw’s last meeting. Governors wished to pass on their thanks to Ella for her contribution and commitment and wished her every success for the future.

- Dates for future meetings:
Full College Governing Body
Monday 18th May 2026 at 5.30pm
Monday 6th July 2026 at 5.30pm

Quality Committee
Monday 20th April 2026 at 5.30pm

Finance Committee

Monday 8th June 2026 at 5.30pm

Meeting end 19.28pm.