



**MINUTES of the Meeting of the Board MEETING**  
**held on Wednesday 25 June 2025 at 15.45**  
**held at 1 Sutherland Street, Pimlico, London**

<b>Members present:</b> Chris Cherry Amali de Alwis Louise Jones Zarine Kharas Gillian Lancaster Imran Razzaq Ben Rix Kathryn Skelton Mark Smith Steven Stanley Susanna Whalley Nick Wilcock  <b>In attendance:</b> Ben Brodie Tina Götschi Sarah Salimullah Chris Payne Jacky Gearey	Chair and External Member External Member External Member External Member – remote External Member External Member - remote Staff Governor External Member – remote CEO External Member External Member - remote External Member  Investment Director, Impetus Foundation Director of Curriculum and Quality for item 4.7 Principal for item 4.8 Interim Director of Finance and Data for items 4.10, 4.11 & 4.13 Clerk
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**Quorum 7 Members**

Item	Topic	Action
	The meeting opened at 15.54 due to technical issues. The Chair welcomed everyone and asked that the main approval items be covered first before discussing the main agenda item – the strategy. All papers to be taken as read to promote more time for discussion and questions.	
	<b>Apologies for Absence</b> There were no apologies for absence.	
	<b>Declarations of Interest in agenda items</b> There were no further declarations of interest relating to this meeting other than those already declared in the Register of Interests.	
4.0	<b>Ratification of Governor</b>	
	The Chair introduced Ben Rix the new staff governor recently elected to the role. Nick Wilcock was recommended to be re-appointed for a further year which the Board endorsed.  <b>Resolved that Ben Rix was elected to the Board and Nick Wilcock was reappointed for a further year.</b>	
4.1	<b>Minutes of Previous meeting</b>	
	<b>Minutes:</b> (i) Meeting 2 April 2025 <b>Confidential minutes:</b> (ii) Meeting 2 April 2025	

	<p>The Board approved the minutes of the meeting held on 2 April 2025 as an accurate record.</p> <p><b>Resolved that both the minutes and confidential minutes were accurate records of the meeting 2 April 2025</b></p>	
4.2	<b>Matters Arising not covered by the agenda</b>	
	<p><b>Item 3.12</b> - provide an update on sustainability in the sixth form curriculum for the next meeting. Another draft is being prepared for the next board meeting in October as currently there is little around sustainability in the curriculum. CEO advised that due to the level of staff turnover in the past 6 months, this has been delayed but will be addressed for the meeting in October. Open</p> <p><b>Item 4.4</b> - complete benchmarking of ratios of learners versus number of people in the safeguarding roles – CEO provided the same rationale as above, data to be provided at the next board meeting. Open</p>	
4.3	<b>Chief Executive's Overview</b>	
	<p>CEO briefly referenced the proposed curriculum changes, fundraising and finance which were all covered separately on the agenda. Progress against the six 24/25 Strategic Priorities was covered, noting that the strategic priority of concern was the apprenticeship volume growth noting that there was a high volume of new employers training small volumes. The Board KPIs listed had been RAG rated. Those of concern had been discussed at length at previous meetings but were the number of sixth form confirmed offers, sixth form total application volumes, % of new apprentices (low income the College did not assist with the recruitment so had limited influence on this KPI), apprentice volume recruitment (numbers were fluctuating but last month an additional number of new partners had been added but for pairs of apprentices). Of note a number of employer partners were deferring to next year when their economic prospects appear brighter. As there were a number of issues here touching the strategy, the Chair said that these would be dealt with later under item 4.5.</p> <p>The Chair referenced the end of the curriculum year and the performance indicators set alongside this and asked the CEO if the outcomes were to be as expected. In answer to this, there were no concerns regarding achievement rates and both sixth form and apprenticeship teams were fully staff from 1 September. Retention was being addressed through exit interviews but reasons for leaving were still remuneration, the recognition of high performance and clear progression, this led to a robust discussion on recruitment, how this was benchmarked and line management development. The Chair noted that this was very important to look at and asked for separate data metrics on the retention of teaching and support staff to be provided by CEO for the next meeting. The CEO confirmed that the Access HR system should be able to provide this.</p> <p>There were no further questions.</p> <p><b>Resolved that:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(i) <b>the Chief Executive's Overview Report was received and noted by the Board</b></li> <li>(ii) <b>separate data metrics on the retention of teaching and support staff to be provided by CEO for next meeting</b></li> </ul>	
4.4	<b>Safeguarding and Prevent Update</b>	
	<p>The report covered key themes for information and included updates from May to 17 June across the College's Sixth Form and Apprenticeship provision. The report was taken as read noting that it had been updated reflecting work completed by the DSL and team to date. Of note the handover documents and links to live cases on CPOMS as well as the internal safeguarding audit undertaken at the College was shared by the previous AP/DSL in April 2025, including information relating to apprenticeships, SEND and safeguarding partnerships.</p>	

	<p>The Chair advised that DfE were redoubling their efforts to oversee KCSIE and CPOMS and it was reassuring to see this reflected in the report e.g. unsolicited WhatsApp groups and use of VPNs. The Board asked about the lessons learnt regarding any issues that were raised concerning a recent staff related incident with the CEO confirming that the better provisions had been brought in with a greater level of rigour especially regarding safeguarding vulnerable adults. The CEO also advised that a safeguarding committee is to be set up chaired by himself in late August.</p> <p><b>Resolved that the Safeguarding and Prevent Update was received and noted by the Board</b></p>	
4.5	<p><b>Strategy review update</b></p> <p>Bain had recently provided 12 weeks of pro bono support which had been instrumental in providing rigorous analysis and insights. This was supported by the involvement and input/feedback of independent governors: Zarine Kharas, Chris Cherry and Kathryn Skelton in some or all of the Steering Committees as well as a number of 1:1 sessions with the Bain consultants. These had informed a draft strategy as presented covering the 5 themes recommended with the Chair confirming that this would shape Ada's ambition over the next 5 years and be crucial to developing the College from a small and growing base to one of sufficient size.</p> <p>The Chair directed the Board to the summary of strategic initiatives to deliver the 'what', the 'how' and 'Board KPIs' which covered five themes:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. double down on sales and outreach – Manchester - recruitment through schools with outreach being a direct approach to commission places for learners</li> <li>2. improve quality of provision to learners and employers – do more with T-Levels including having secured placements before intake. How will this be rated by Ofsted as there needed to be a gauge i.e. exemplary is an ambitious target for the future</li> <li>3. optimize operating model and employee value proposition – look at vacancy rate</li> <li>4. increase fundraising – more work on philanthropy from corporates and high net worth individuals to support the core mission, noting that DfE does not consider philanthropic fundraising for the support of teaching</li> <li>5. deliver with rigorous assurance – strategic aims tracker of progress by initiative: If the College does not do well then it is not viable long term.</li> </ol> <p>Of note the other Board KPIs not discussed included current year revenue, cost, surplus/deficit and reserves.</p> <p>The Chair led a robust and constructive discussion on how the Board and College support does these initiatives which included the design of the marketing function, being more self-critical using the example that more of the same did not work, re-thinking outreach, re-working learners' and employers' recruitment and the development of manager capability seen as critical in retention and a big enabler. Regarding the next steps, the CEO advised that the ELT are to have several sessions over the summer to digest the outputs of their work and hone the draft strategy into one which is fully bought into and ready to be shared with the Board in more detail more fully. This will also be discussed at the all-staff session in September. In essence the strategy will need to be better articulated with improved differentiation within the sixth form and apprenticeship areas where the curriculum is not seen as cutting edge. The Chair concurred with that approach stating that the curriculum was essential and mapping this was critical. The Chair summarized the discussion outputs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Board is comfortable with the change of priorities</li> <li>• Separation between learners and employers was essential</li> </ul>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reconfigure the employer proposition – sales outreach and employer engagement feel different quoting T-level</li> <li>• Learner proposition – curriculum changes, look at feeder schools</li> <li>• Fundraising – targets need to be stretched but achievable</li> <li>• Quality of provision – critical</li> <li>• Rigorous assurance – to deliver the aims</li> </ul> <p>At the Board meeting in October the final strategy with KPIs will be completed. The CEO asked that to facilitate this, a 'task &amp; finish' committee be set up to work with the ELT to shape the next phase over the summer. Describing strategy as transformational, the Board said that it had to be linked to the mission statement.</p> <p><b>Resolved that the Strategy review update was received and noted by the Board</b></p>	
4.6	<b>Chairs Summary Reports</b>	
	<p>Chairs' summary reports from the following committees: Board Membership, Finance &amp; Resources, Education and Audit were noted with much of the discussion and approval items as board agenda items. For reassurance the chairs of the respective committees confirmed that the items presented for approval had each been scrutinised by their respective committees before being recommended to the Board for approval.</p> <p><b>Resolved that the Chairs Summary Reports were received and noted by the Board</b></p>	
4.7	<b>Manchester Sixth Form</b>	
	<p>Tina Götschi and Sarah Salimullah joined the meeting at 16.20</p> <p>As previously minuted the initial efforts to launch a T-Level Digital Design Development and Production (Software Development) provision in Manchester for September 2025 had faced significant challenges. The Board at their previous meeting had given the Education committee the delegated authority to decide whether to proceed for a September launch 2025 or to postpone it until 2026/27. This deferral will allow the College to implement a revised strategy focused on securing robust employer partnerships and developing a clearer, more distinctive offering, which was critical for successful T-Level delivery. The Chair noted the points raised but said that it was critical to have work placements arranged before the recruitment process started emphasising that the process had to be rigorous. The Board asked about having a bespoke team for T-levels which CEO advised would sit with the business development team going forward. Finally the Board asked if there would be individual or team KPIs on this and the CEO confirmed that this would be looked at and apportioned accordingly.</p> <p><b>Resolved that Manchester Sixth Form report was received, and the Board noted the no-go decision taken by the Education committee</b></p>	
4.8	<b>Sixth Form curriculum changes - London</b>	
	<p>The Principal provided a report on the alternative qualification offer which has allowed the study of multiple AAQs alongside A Level complementing the current curriculum model at Ada. The range of options explored had resulted in the development of a new suite of academically rigorous and employer-aligned digital pathways based on approved combinations of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A-Levels (Computer Science, Mathematics, Business, Psychology, Graphics)</li> <li>• OCR Level 3 AAQs: Application Development and Data Analytics which provide UCAS points</li> <li>• Pearson Level 3 AAQs: Information Technology and Computing which provide UCAS points</li> <li>• Continued delivery of T Level in Digital Design and Production</li> </ul>	

	<p>The OCR and Pearson Alternative Academic Qualifications (AAQs) were structurally and thematically distinct. Their inclusion with a dual AAQ pathway such as in the Pioneer, Innovator or Creator routes was both fundable and educationally sound offering student a well-rounded digital curriculum without risk of funding duplication or curriculum redundancy. The AAQ pathways were embedded in the College's curriculum, with the academic year 2027/28 marking the next strategic stage of provision development which the Principal briefly covered.</p> <p>The following points were discussed including how this was going to be marketed as there were very different audiences noting that this was a complicated issue and if there were any transition training, currently none is known. The Board then commented that it was key to identify which universities accept these qualifications and in so doing ensuring that the marketing reflects this conscious that students and parents may default to known courses or ones they felt were safe. A robust discussion carried on regarding the possible use of TikTok and the benefits of using this type of marketing, albeit it was noted that the College cannot legally market to r students under 16yr. It was agreed that the College would need more digital expertise and that using external agencies could be considered. The Education committee had endorsed the curriculum changes and the Board so approved.</p> <p><b>Resolved that the update on Sixth Form curriculum plan was received and agreed by the Board</b></p> <p>Tina Götschi &amp; Sarah Salimullah left the meeting at 16.54</p>	
4.9	<b>Fundraising Strategy</b>	
	<p>The Fundraising Strategy was presented for noting. The CEO in brief outlined some of the critical success factors in partnership/donation including mission alignment and volunteering opportunities and provided a SWOT analysis. In essence the strategy is to retain and uplift current support as well as win new support providing market aligned propositions, ability to deliver engagement, and high quality account management and reporting. The outlook for 25/26 and 26/27 was discussed referencing the targets set against budgeted targets and money already banked. The Board thanked the CEO for the update.</p> <p><b>Resolved that Fundraising Strategy was received and noted by the Board.</b></p>	
4.12	<b>Skills Accountability Statement</b>	
	<p>A Local Needs Duty Assessment must be undertaken every three years and the College will be completing this in the next 12 months. As part of this process, the College is required to publish an annual Skills Accountability Statement which follows the overall structure of the previous statement and links into the College's Strategic Plan. The statement is for 2025/26, the first year of the three year cycle and follows the same format as last year. The CEO briefed the Board on the final version of the accountability statement which requires the Governing body to review how the College provision meets local and high priority skills and is part of the annual funding agreement with the DfE. The statement presented aligned with the local skills and employers' skills needs of both the Greater London and Manchester regions and sets out a number of objectives that Ada will take during the year to meet local, regional or national skills in line with areas of the curriculum that the College is planning to grow for the coming year. Of note the strategic aims 1- 4 for 2025-26 will change and there will be iterations for the new strategy which is in the process of being finalised which will run until July 2030. For reassurance the Education committee had reviewed and made suggested amendments to the statement before its presentation to the Board for sign off. The Board approved the document for submission to DfE.</p> <p><b>Resolved that the Accountability Statement was received and approved by the Board</b></p>	

4.13	<b>Risk Register Summary</b>	
	<p>The strategic risk register had been fully reviewed by the audit committee with no new risks added. Of the 23 strategic risks, one has moved in a positive direction, two negatively and the remainder no change. There remained only one red residual risk rating i.e. related to apprenticeship volumes as previously minuted. For information the risk register is to be reassessed against the new strategy as it is finalised. The Board so noted. There were no questions.</p> <p><b>Resolved that Risk Register was received and noted by the Board</b></p>	
4.14	<b>Draft HR Recruitment and Retention Strategy</b>	
	<p>CEO briefly explained that as the level of staff turnover was too high (reasons for which had been previously discussed at length and minuted) the strategy in consultation with Bain centred on four pillars, each of which has a series of interventions that the College should or are doing. The final draft is to be brought to the next Finance &amp; Resources meeting for further discussion and approval. The Board discussed the viability of having a graduate teaching programme and the associated challenges. There were no further questions.</p> <p><b>Resolved that the Draft HR Recruitment and Retention Strategy was received and noted by the Board</b></p>	
4.15	<b>Approval of the following:</b>	
	<p><b>Code of Governance</b> Compliance with the DfE funding conditions requires the College to adopt either the Association of Colleges Code of Governance (AoC Code) or comply with the Charity Governance Code. Whilst either of these codes has a number of principles in common, certain areas are more developed in particular the compliance requirements. The Charities Code was adopted in July 2021 by the College because it was felt at the time to be a more straightforward code for the Board to ensure that its governance structures were fit for purpose, would achieve the College's aims and comply with relevant legislation. However Ada is now an established FE College, and the AoC Code is more relevant. The Director of Finance confirmed that Ada will have little problem meeting the code, but reference would be made in the financial statements that the College would pay heed to the Charities Code especially for NCDS Ltd. The Board approved adoption of the Code effective for the new academic year.</p> <p><b>Instrument &amp; Articles</b> Amendments covered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• reference to Secretary of State for Education</li> <li>• number of board members (14),</li> <li>• following receipt of letter from DfE (17 June 25) reference to the voting rights of a student member and quorum,</li> <li>• terms of office - for an additional period to four</li> <li>• change of search committee to board membership</li> <li>• minor grammatical points</li> </ul> <p>The Board approved the changes.</p> <p><b>Terms of References for Audit, Board Membership, Education, Finance &amp; Resources and Remuneration</b> – there were only minor changes. The Board approved the terms of reference for all committees.</p> <p><b>Corporation cycle of business 25/26</b> – the Board approved the changes highlighted.</p> <p><b>Education committee</b> – name of the committee to be amended to Education and Impact. Recommended for approval by Education committee as the inclusion of impact is focused on measuring how effective the college is on mission and theory of</p>	

	<p>change. Ultimately, this will allow Board Members to better see the flow of the College's work from initial recruitment and enrolment through to long-term outcomes data for the learners. The Board approved.</p> <p><b>Resolved that the following documents and committees' terms of reference were received and approved by the Board:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Adoption of AoC Code of Governance with effect 1 August 2025</b></li> <li>• <b>Instrument and Articles</b></li> <li>• <b>Committee terms of reference for: Audit, Board Membership, Education, Finance &amp; Resources and Remuneration.</b></li> </ul> <p>Further to the recent Board Membership committee meeting in May, the following Chairs of committees for 25-26 were recommended for approval:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Audit – Gillian Lancaster</li> <li>• Board Membership – Chris Cherry</li> <li>• Education – Steve Stanley</li> <li>• Finance &amp; Resources – Nick Wilcock</li> <li>• Remuneration – Nick Wilcock</li> </ul> <p><b>Resolved that the Chairs of committees as referenced above for 2025-26 were approved by the Board</b></p>	
4.16	<b>Board Performance Self-Assessment 2024-25</b>	
	<p>The self-assessment questionnaire used for 2023/24 will be used for 2024/25 so that a direct comparison can be made. Again a target of 80% has been set for governor satisfaction with the effectiveness of the Board. All members including ELT would be asked to complete the return by 15 August.</p> <p><b>Resolved that the Board and ELT were asked to complete the Board Performance Self-Assessment 2024-25 to returned to the Clerk by 15 August 2025.</b></p>	
4.17	<b>Forward Agenda Items</b>	
	1. Strategic aims and Board KPIs	
4.18	<b>Any Other Business</b>	
	There was no other business.	
4.19	<b>Date of Next meeting:</b>	
	1. 15 October 2025 at 15.45	
	<b>Close of meeting</b>	
	Meeting closed at 18.19	