St Brendan's Catholic Sixth Form College
Board of Governors

O P E N – M I N U T E S

In Person and Virtual Meeting Held On: **Wednesday 10 December 2025**

D-Building Room D2/D3 at 16:00– 19:15 hrs

Governors Present: Svetlana Bajic-Raymond [Chair of Governors] [R], Maragret Abazie-Humprey [R], Uzo Agyare-Kumi, Gareth Beynon, Roger Bridgeman, Antonia Corrigan, James Creamer [Chair of Meeting], Marian Curran [Principal], Sr Margaret Harlock MBE, Cassie Hogg, Doug Jennings, Melaine Jonik, Mark O'Sullivan, Paul Ryan, Peter Turner, Iain Turri, [16]

Apologies: Michelle Hazelwood [1]

Absent without Apology: Ramatu Hassan-King [1]

Attending: Leanne Sowersby [Governance Professional], David Beesley [Vice Principal, Student Experience Progression], Stephen Clayson [Vice Principal, Curriculum, Quality and Innovation], Shane Blackshaw [Executive Director, Finance]

Quorum Present: 16/18 [40% of governors in post, includes required minimum of 4 Foundation Governors]
Note – [R]* – remote attendance in MS Office Teams

Circulation: All Governors, Governance Professional, Principalship, & [College Website after signature if declared OPEN].

ITEM	ISSUES RAISED IN DISCUSSION	ACTION
1. Welcome	***1.1 Welcome:*** JC opened the meeting with prayer. Apologies accepted ***1.2 Quorate***: The meeting was declared quorate.	
2. Declarations of Interest	***2.1 Declaration 2023/2024 Access/Equality/Safeguarding Declaration***: There were no additional declarations.	
3. Minutes Previous Meetings	***3.1 Previous Minutes: Open Minutes – 22 October 2025*** The Minutes were agreed as a true and accurate record of the meeting, to be signed by the Chair of Governors electronically. The open Minutes to be made available on the College website by the Governance Professional.	
4. Matters Arising & Actions	***4.1 Actions Report:*** see actions report for details ***4.2 Matters Arising:*** None	
5. Governors' Committee Reports	***5.1 Audit Committee:*** RB updated. The Audit Committee report will be shared as soon as possible ***5.2 Ethos Safeguarding Welfare Committee:*** The committee has not met since the last meeting. ***5.3 Resources Premises Human Resources Committee:*** JC updated. The WECA partnership work has been deferred. Two polices were shared and are shared with the board for noting. *CH joined the meeting* ***5.4 Finance Committee:***IT noted that the main points are on this agenda. ***5.5 Strategy, Search & Remuneration Committee:*** SBR noted that the relevant points are on this agenda. ***5.6 Teaching Curriculum Quality Committee:*** SBR updated. There was a report from DBe on student outcomes and teaching and learning.	
6. Diocesan Education Strategy	***6.1 Aquinas Partnership Report:*** MC noted that work with the partnership continues. We are running an Aquinas sports day. The partnership includes St Bernadettes and a number of primary schools. *MAH joined the meeting* ***6.2 Diocesan Education Strategy Report / MAT update:*** SrMH gave an update on a meeting with the Bishop, the Chief Operating Officer and Director of Schools and Colleges, of the Diocese earlier this week. The Bishop confirmed that his vision was for all schools in the Diocese to be in a MAT by 2027, and this includes St Brendan's. There was also concern expressed about St Brendan's not being sufficiently Catholic.	

	SrMH read from the Bishop's Vision from July 2024. JC talked through some key points that were raised at the meeting: • The Bishop's Vision is not negotiable. St Brendan's must be in the Newman MAT by 2027. • An empty MAT is not an option. • The Bishop wants to know how this will be achieved. • The new Chair must be brought up to speed and should contact the education team once in post. • The Board of Governors must engage regularly with leadership of Newman trust and with the Diocese. • The Diocese education department and the trust are ready to help when asked. • A date must be fixed for a meeting of the full board, including staff members, with the Diocese and trust. Governors noted that the Principal was not in attendance at the meeting and did not receive the summary email of the meeting. SrMH and JC were advised that governors run the college rather than the executive, and that governors must take this work on board and lead proactively to achieve this outcome. It was noted that the Principal is also a governor. SrMH noted various inaccuracies that were mentioned, such as that we have not been in touch with the trust, which we have. Governors noted that the legislation governing schools is different to that governing colleges, and there is an obligation on governors to prioritise the interests of the college. There is a need for governors to have a clear understanding of all of their obligations and how best to balance these. Governors also noted that, while they are knowledgeable about their own areas, they are not all experts in the running of the college or the process of academisation, and concern was expressed about MC being excluded from the process and meetings, since she has the best knowledge of the college and the process. Discussion around the idea that governors would be running the college. The executive and their team would be the ones running the college day to day, with governors are there to oversee, challenge and assist. Noted that the governing body make key strategic decisions in the running of the college. There was a further discussion around potential conflicts of interest created by statutory responsibilities, the requirements of the Diocese etc. Discussion around the involvement of the Principal in further meetings and the delegated powers of governors. Governors noted that there are currently no examples of other Catholic sixth form colleges having joined vertical MATs. There was a discussion around the need for further clarity, including what joining the MAT would look like, the potential legal and statutory implications, financial implications etc. Advice should be sought on how best to perform the due diligence required for a process such as this. **Governors agreed that the Board of Governors reserve the right to decide who will attend meetings to discuss matters of interest of**	

	the college. Governors noted that the letter of July referred to primary and secondary schools, and did not mention the college. It was also noted that we have not had a reply to our request for further information from the Diocese, made in July. However, the Bishop confirmed that this directive included the college. The Principal was instructed to seek further advice on the powers and duties of the Governing Body, in relation to this, and to any potential conflicts that could arise in terms of their various obligations, as part of the due diligence process. Governors discussed inviting the Diocese / trust to the Governor Day on 13th February for the meeting requested.	
7. Principal's Report	***7.1 Student Enrolment 2024/2025:*** MC talked though the current numbers – applications 1827, 783 have been offered, 780 acceptances. The population of 16–18-year-olds has increased. ***7.2 Staffing / Recruitment:*** MC talked through the key points. We are currently fully staffed, with some new staff starting and some agency cover in place. **Q – Does the increasing 16–18-year-old population create capacity issues?** We have amended the timetable to increase capacity to accommodate this. **Q – Will the vacant Vice-Principal's post be advertised in the New Year?** Yes. There was a discussion around which posts are reserved and Diocese involvement in appointments to the Principalship.	
8. College Business	***8.1 College Self-Assessment Report:*** DB shared a presentation and talked through the key points. Governors are asked to validate the judgements, and DBe noted that these are made relating to the old Ofsted framework. ***8.3 College Quality Improvement Plan:*** DBe talked through the categories in the new Ofsted Framework and how these have been incorporated into the QIP and then shared a presentation. Governors thanked DBe for the documents. **Q – Will this document be looked at for the S48?** No, but it could be useful to include Catholics in the local community and spirituality in the document. **Q – How is the curriculum balanced between the various qualifications, and how might this change with AI etc?** DBe talked through the AAQs that we currently provide. We are very aware of AI and there is a reference to digital skills in the new framework. It is important not to assume that students know how to use computers in terms of MS Office etc. The balance is still predominantly A-Level, with a smaller group doing vocational qualifications. There are students mixing the type of qualifications. A small percentage are doing four. **Q – Why are we not a 1 for behaviour?** Behaviour is excellent, but DBe would want to see attendance increase to give this the higher rating. For engagement, we would also like to see where the disadvantaged students are engaging.	

	Q – What percentage of the student population completed the questionnaires? To be confirmed. **Q – Is there any opportunity for students to practice oracy, make presentations etc?** We have had Voice 21 come into college to work with students around oracy. They have left us with a set of recommendations. Students noted that there have been changes in subjects that demonstrate that these changes are happening. **Q – Why is girls' attendance lower?** Students are attending their experience at college and attend because they enjoy the whole experience. We try to foster strong relationships and boys especially thrive on this. There are always individual cases, and the systems are much better this year in dealing with these. We are also female heavy, which may skew the figures. We have also started using video conferencing, in the form of small robots, to allow students to access college who are struggling to attend in-person. **Q – How much does the attendance data influence the assessment under the framework?** We do use the data, there is no hard and fast threshold. We do have confidence in the data, although acknowledge that it can be skewed. Discussion around the data and the accuracy of this and whether this is audited. This is the last time we will need to send this to Ofsted. **Governors approved a rating of 'Good' for Quality of Education, Behaviour and Attitudes, Personal Development, Leadership and Management, Education programmes for young people and provision for learners with high needs; and a rating of 'Reasonable Contribution' for Contribution of college to meeting the skills need.** ***8.2 Section 48 Self-Assessment Report:*** MC talked through the key points. This is aligned with the Catholic Inspection Framework. We are not rating ourselves as Outstanding. There is work to be done around Chaplaincy, which is underway; further work on prayer and liturgy and around provision of prayer. Work in the classroom is now being linked to the Catholicity if the college. **Q – Do we have sufficient robust evidence to support 'good' in all areas of Catholic life?** The weakest areas were opportunities for prayer and liturgy. There is direct support from the Diocese to support the Chaplaincy and Head of RPE **Q – What is happening with the student voice?** We are on the second round of student voice around thought for the week. There will be student voice from a pilgrimage day. There was a discussion around inviting governors to some of the work around this in the college. There will be some work with staff around Catholic social teaching. MC highlighted the work that governors are doing around this area.	
9. College/ Financial Matters	***9.1 Annual Report and Financial Statement – for adoption:*** SBk talked through the key points. Noted that there have been some updates in terminology around disabilities. The EBIDTA and operating surplus exceeded budget. The cash balance was 32 cash days, and the solvency ratio has moved from 0.61 to 1.39. SBk noted that we are unable to reclaim VAT which was worth around £240k last year.	

	There were some issues around the fixed asset register and HR information which have been resolved. There is a risk noted in the accounts relating to the going concern judgment and the possibility of joining a MAT, SBk will check that this wording is still sufficient following the discussions above. **Governors approved the Annual Report and Financial Statement** ***9.2 External Audit Summary Report:*** SBk noted that the final version of this has been shared and will be signed by JC, in the absence of SBR. All references to SBR in the document will refer to JC. ***9.3 Internal Audit Report 2024/2025:*** The report has been shared. There were no questions. ***9.4 Audit Committee Annual Report:*** RB will share this as soon as possible ***9.5 Current College Cash Flow Update and Management Accounts:*** SBk gave an update. September management accounts have been shared, the updated cash position is 48 cash days against a budgeted 39, although this is largely a timing issue. The latest forecast against July is 36 cash days against a budget of 34. The DfE target is 40 days at the end of each month. **Q – Where are we likely to be in another 12 months?** This is difficult to predict with any certainty. Discussion around the possibility of a top-slice if we are to join a MAT. We would expect there to be cost savings to balance this, but would need to understand the detail to assess the impact upon the College's finances ***9.6 Staff Pay Awards – Approval Ratification:*** LS advised that both the Support Staff and Teachers' pay awards had been previously approved via MS Forms, with 15 responses to the Support Staff award and 12 to the Teachers' pay award, in addition to email responses. **Governors approved these decisions.** ***9.7 Estate Development Report (security gates spend):*** SBk discussed the security gates and fencing. The proposal is to free some resource from the existing CapEx plan to do the security gates, for which we need to commit £50k funding, which requires full board approval. The proposal would be to continue with two security personnel once the gates are installed, then review after a period. **Governors approved the £50k spend on security gates, proposed AC, seconded RB** We also need to remove and replace the insulation on the air handling units The consultants who have been looking at CIF bids have identified two potential bids; for roof refurbishment, and the teaching block replacement. When we asked for these bids to be prepared, we were unaware of the likely tender cost. As a VA establishment, we would be required to make a minimum 10% contribution towards the bids c.£0.5M. The bid deadline is next Tuesday. SBk talked through the options and risks of the projects If the bids were to be successful, which would be known in May / June of next year, it is possible to change the scope of the projects in order to reduce the costs. There is also the possibility of withdrawing the application.	

	We would have up to three years before the funding was withdrawn, and the contribution becomes payable at the end of the project. The grant payments would be at the beginning of the project and could be placed in an interest-bearing account. SBk is requesting governors to support the submission of the bid **Q – Is the price fixed for three years?** The quoted price is guaranteed up until September 2026. We would make a decision when the outcome of the bid is known, and once the work is started, the price will be fixed. **Q – Do we believe we will have the ability to make the payments?** We cannot be sure at this point, due to not knowing the funding settlements. There is no cheaper way to get this work done. SBk had included a provision for the temporary building in the budget but not for the roof repairs. We have had significant issues with roof leaks but were unaware of the extent of the need. The re-build would likely not take place until summer 2027. Noted that we can decide not to do the re-build (if enrolment numbers are lower than expected) and just do the roof. **Governors approved making the application on the basis of a 10% contribution to the project.**	
10. Board of Governors' Operations	***10.1 Election of Chair:*** SBR will resign as Chair at the end of this month. DJ is prepared to take on the role of Chair from January for the remainder of the academic year, and will be clear to act in the best interests of the college. DJ proposed as Chair, seconded SrMH – **Doug Jennings appointed as Chair from January** ***10.2 CES Code of Conduct:*** Discussion around this. **MC/LS to take further advice**. ***10.3 Governor Vacancies / Recruitment update:*** MC requested Foundation Governors to interview a potential Foundation Governor. There may be one other candidate. MC noted her thanks to SBR for her work and support as Chair. Governors echoed this. *SBR left the meeting* ***10.4 Governance Review Action Plan Update:*** The updated plan has been shared. LS noted that item 11 is now complete. *DJ left the meeting* ***10.5 Governor Day:*** To further confirm timings etc. ***10.6 Governors' Briefing next Meeting:*** New Ofsted framework, developments in the sector, including the White paper	MC/LS
11. Policy Reviews	***11.1 Anti Money Laundering Policy – for noting:*** Policy noted ***11.2 CCTV Policy – for noting:*** Policy noted ***11.3 Equalities Report – for noting:*** Policy noted	

12. Risk Management	***12.1 Review of Board of Governors' Risk Register Items:*** SBk talked through the key points. Four new risks have been added which are highlighted and a new column has been added for when the risk might occur. Noted that risk 6.2 may need to be reviewed to a higher level. ***12.2 Safeguarding/PREVENT Review:*** AC has met with TSc on 21 November and plans to look at the Single Central Record. There was a bomb scare and a lockdown practice which were both handled smoothly. AC talked through some of the key concerns; home life, drug use, inappropriate language; illegal vapes and online activity. TSc noted that CH, Safeguarding & Welfare Administrator, is brilliant! The DfE and law enforcement want to come in to learn from how we dealt with the bomb scare. **Q – Is there awareness of the use of AI for mental health advice among teens and the issue with this?** Yes, MC is checking Smoothwall to see what is being looked at. This will be discussed in tutorials around the dangers of this.	
13. Any Other Business	***13.1*** None	
14. Date Next Meetings	Board of Governors – Wednesday 1 April 2026 at 16:00 Audit Committee – Wednesday 25 February 2026 at 16:00 Ethos Safeguarding Welfare Committee – Thursday 5 February 2026 at 16:00 Finance Committee – Wednesday 11 March 2026 at 16:00 Resources Premises Human Resources Committee – Tuesday 3 March 2026 at 16:00 Strategy, Search & Remuneration Committee – Wednesday 28 January 2026 at 16:00 Teaching Curriculum Quality Committee – Wednesday 25 March 2026 at 16:00 Governors' Day 2024/2025 – Friday 13 February 2026	
Minutes Agreed	**Minutes Approved** **Date** **Signature** ______________________________________**Chair of Governors**	