SPARSHOLT COLLEGE HAMPSHIRE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE QUALITY & STANDARDS COMMITTEE

held on 12 February 2026 at 09:30 at Sparsholt College Campus

[1]**PRESENT**	G Baker (C); C Kearney (St); J Milburn (P); R Palmer (E); H Perry (S); A Rowley (E) (Chair); C Wilson (C)
In attendance:	D Mernagh, Vice Principal & Dean of Higher Education H Mitchell, Apprenticeship Manager (minutes 19 to xx) K Payne, Assistant Principal English & Maths (minutes xx to xx) R Price, Director of Learning & Quality B Stokes, Vice Principal Curriculum (Andover) M Treagust, Vice Principal Curriculum (Sparsholt) S Willson, Head of Corporate Governance

WELCOME, APOLOGIES AND MEMBERSHIP

1. The Committee Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting.
2. Apologies were received from C Brown and J Loretto.
3. The Committee Chair advised that it was R Palmer's and H Perry's last meeting before the end of their terms of office as a co-opted member and staff governor, respectively, and thanked them both for their valuable contributions to the committee's work.
4. The Committee Chair also thanked C Kearney for her involvement as student governor this year.
5. The committee noted that J Loretto was transferring to the Resources Committee from May and the committee would be joined at the next meeting by newly appointed governors C Brown and J Adey.

DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

6. There were no interests to declare.

MINUTES

7. **Resolved** – that the minutes of the meeting held on 27 November 2025 be confirmed as a correct record (with the minute numbering updated).
8. Wi-Fi coverage (minute 135/25): The committee noted the Vice Principal Curriculum (Andover)'s confirmation that the remaining works to upgrade Wi-Fi coverage at the Andover campus would be completed over February Reading Break, welcoming the responsiveness of management to the staff and student concerns which had been discussed by the committee and the investment by the college to support digital supported learning. The Vice Principal

[1] (C) = Co-opted; (E) = External; (P) = Principal; (S) = Staff; (St) = Student

undertook to follow up an issue the student governor raised about IT connectivity in the Art department.

9. Apprenticeships (138/25): An update on the availability of end point assessments (EPAs) was provided under the apprenticeships progress report on the agenda.

10. FE Performance (154/25): The Director of Learning & Quality had shared with the Committee Chair the curriculum area Self Assessment Review (SAR) plan which demonstrated alignment with the Ofsted FE inspection toolkit. The committee also considered insights shared by attendees arising from the first published FE inspection reports under the new framework. The Committee Chair noted the value of the overview presented by G Baker at the recent AoC Quality & Curriculum Governors' Network meeting. The Principal agreed to explore with the Chair whether a similar briefing should be offered at a future Governors' Seminar to further support the Board's understanding.

11. Prevent Duty Risk Assessment (179/25): The Principal reported on the lockdown practices carried out on both campuses during November and December. The committee noted the procedures had generally operated effectively, with students responding appropriately. A number of actions and learning points had been identified and these were being addressed by management, with future practice exercises planned. During discussion, the committee sought additional information for assurance regarding communication methods to be used during lockdowns. The committee welcomed the evidence of continued management commitment to ensuring effective safety measures were in place.

12. The committee noted that the resolutions of the committee had been implemented and that there were no other matters arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

HIGHER EDUCATION

13. The committee received and reviewed the Vice Principal & Dean of HE's progress report on delivery of the UCS Strategic Plan 2025-2030 and UCS APP 2025-2030 in relation to areas of the plans within the remit of the committee.

14. In discussion, the committee scrutinised several key areas in detail:

- The analysis of withdrawal data, noting that the majority of withdrawals were linked to students' individual personal circumstances. Members sought and received assurance about the robustness of support measures for mental health, wellbeing and learning support, and noted the withdrawal rate was currently significantly below the maximum year-end target.

- The uptake of one-to-one support for students with learning disabilities and difficulties, and how UCS balances developing student independence with providing targeted interventions where needed. The committee sought assurance that clear aims and measures of impact were in place for the investment in the HE Academic & Learning Support team.

- The trial of a more flexible approach to assessment designed to enable students to demonstrate learning outcomes through a wider range of methods, including approaches suitable for those with neurodiversity. Members sought further assurance about how academic rigour and integrity of degree outcomes were being maintained, noting the role of the University of Portsmouth in setting criteria and the scrutiny of External Examiners.

- The range and timing of information provided to students about progression to top-up degrees and post graduate study.
- The changes introduced to the teaching observation processes this year and the identification of themes informing continuing professional development (CPD) priorities.

15. The committee received assurance from the Dean of HE that the year-end APP targets were not at risk, despite slight slippage in some planned actions at this point of the year. It was also noted that changes to the delivery model of the HE curriculum from next year would support the HE team to assess how students were performing at an earlier point, informing interventions during the year.

16. The committee sought an update on actions arising from the National Student Survey (NSS) results previously reported to the committee. The Dean of HE reported students had been informed of 'you said, we did' actions and internal student voice surveys had been aligned with NSS questions to help understand and act on feedback in a timely manner. The new NSS had been launched and students were being encouraged to participate.

17. The committee considered and endorsed a proposal to amend the wording of action SA2.4.3 within Priority 2 of the Strategic Plan to clearly describe the intended purpose.

18. **Resolved** – to recommend to the Board of Governors to amend the wording of action SA2.4.3 in the UCS Strategic Plan 2025-2030 from "Review of HE processes to ensure that they align with expectations of a university" to "Review processes and practices to ensure the UCS students' experience meets their expectations of a HE environment".

FURTHER EDUCATION

<u>FE Performance and College Improvement Plan</u>

19. The committee received and reviewed the progress report on FE performance and the College Improvement Plan (CIP) for 2025-26 presented by the Director of Learning & Quality and the Vice Principals Curriculum. The report included analysis of 2024/25 MiDES benchmarking data from the Association of Colleges (AoC), providing external context for performance.

20. The committee noted that overall progress against the CIP remained positive, with most targets currently on track. The committee's scrutiny focused on those curriculum areas at Andover and Sparsholt where challenges persisted in relation to attendance and/or retention. The Vice Principals were questioned on specific examples to clarify the underlying causes and provide assurance that appropriate and timely actions were in place.

21. In relation to attendance:
    - Members discussed the strategic attendance target of 93%, noting that comparison with national benchmarking data was limited due to differing recording methodologies across colleges. The Principal confirmed that the high target was intentional, reflecting the college's emphasis on attendance to support inclusion and achievement.
    - The Vice Principal (Andover) responded to feedback from the Student Governor on the impact of timetable structure on attendance and outlined steps being taken to address this. Members also sought assurance that student views at Sparsholt about attendance

were considered and the impact of actions measured; the Vice Principal (Sparsholt) confirmed this, citing Level 1 Animal Management as an example.

- Members questioned and were assured by the continued systematic use of attendance registers and ongoing analysis of reasons for non-attendance to identify patterns and inform interventions.

22. The committee welcomed evidence of strong strategic and cultural focus on inclusion, recognising the importance of inclusion across all parts of the provision. The committee noted that inclusion was also overseen by the Wellbeing Committee in relation to the EDI action plan. Members took assurance from the CPD provided to teaching staff to embed inclusion practices and remove barriers to learning. Members also noted targeted actions to support learners at risk of withdrawal, including the implementation of the new Growth Programme.

23. Members sought and received further assurance regarding recent external verification activity undertaken by awarding bodies, noting that, where actions had been identified, management had responded appropriately.

<u>Apprenticeships</u>

24. The committee received and reviewed the Apprenticeship Manager's progress report on apprenticeship performance indicators and the actions being taken to support apprenticeship achievement in 2025-26. This followed a request from the committee at its previous meeting for further assurance on key performance risk and improvement activity.

25. The committee noted that apprenticeship achievement at this point in the year was significantly higher than the same point in 2024-25 and exceeded the national benchmark for apprenticeship standards. Enhanced internal quality review processes were in place and management actions had been implemented to address the previously observed pattern of year-on-year variation in achievement. The committee also noted the work underway with employers to strengthen attendance, engagement, and timely progress for apprentices.

26. Members scrutinised a range of key areas, including withdrawal trends, learner survey feedback and the availability and scheduling of End Point Assessment (EPAs). Members sought and received additional assurance regarding the actions in place to mitigate withdrawals and how the impact of actions arising from survey feedback was being measured and monitored.

27. The committee was assured by the evidence of progress achieved year-to-date and by the management focus on robust processes to monitor apprenticeship performance, including strong in-year retention, timely progress to EPA, first-time EPA pass rates at or above national benchmarks, and sustained employer and apprentice satisfaction.

<u>Maths and English</u>

28. The committee received and reviewed the progress report presented by the Assistant Principal English & Maths on the English and Maths action plan. The report included analysis of 2024/25 MiDES benchmarking data from the Association of Colleges (AoC), providing external context for performance.

29. The committee noted that English and Maths remain areas of strategic significance and challenge and therefore receive termly scrutiny.

30. The committee noted continued improvements across both GCSE and Functional Skills provision, although the lower outcomes in the Maths GCSE November resits illustrated the constraints of the short teaching period available at the start of the academic year to determine the appropriate curriculum focus for resit learners.

31. The committee recognised that, although attendance was improving, it remained below the targeted level. Members welcomed the implementation of new mechanisms to encourage and support learners to attend. The committee also noted activities taking place with parents and learners to reinforce homework and revision opportunities which had been adapted for both campuses, including residential learners and those with specific needs, such as young carers.

32. Members sought and received additional assurance about staffing capacity, noting that there was a full complement of English and Maths teachers in place and that recruitment for additional posts 2026-27 was underway, reflecting the projected increase in FE applications.

33. The Committee Chair reported key observations from her Link visit to English and Maths, highlighting the importance of high-quality teaching teams and their ability to understand and support the individual circumstances of learners.

34. The committee was satisfied to report to the Board that the factors influencing the performance of English and Maths were well understood by management and that improving outcomes in English and Maths remained a clear and active priority for the college.

Learning & Quality Activity

35. The committee received and reviewed the Director of Learning & Quality's report outlining quality monitoring, assurance and improvement activities in the year to date. This included the External Quality Review (EQR) report on Vocational Practical (Andover), the Teaching and Learning Observations (TALO) programme, feedback from the Autumn FE learner 'Pulse' survey, and learner progress reviews.

36. The committee noted the key strengths and areas of development identified through the EQR of vocational practical learning. Members discussed the actions being taken to encourage learners to take notes during learning and to support Curriculum Leaders in understanding the performance of teaching and learners in their areas, despite not directly conducting lesson observations.

37. The committee reviewed the developments to the TALO process introduced during 2025-26 and the analysis of the TALOs outcomes. Members noted how findings from observations were informing targeted support and development activities in-year and shaping priorities for the following year. The Staff Governor highlighted that teaching staff welcomed timely mid-year feedback with actions which could be implemented immediately.

38. The committee considered the outcomes of the Autumn FE learner Pulse Survey and noted the decline in engagement compared with Autumn 2024, reversing the previous upward trend. Members were advised this was due to software technical issues and that a new system would be implemented from Easter 2026 onwards to rectify the problem. The committee welcomed the use of learner focus groups to explore survey themes and actions, noting that survey action plans were monitored through Quality Faculty Review meetings. Regarding a member's question about feedback in relation to Progress Coaches, the Director

of Learning & Quality explained that short-term staffing capacity issues had affected the consistency of support in some areas.

39. The committee discussed the progress of qualifications subject to enhanced quality monitoring and noted examples of effective management action taken to support learner achievement. Members recognised the potential impact of staffing changes, such as the loss of an experienced teacher or a high proportion of newly qualified staff, and were assured that management actively sought to mitigate associated risks.

HEALTHCHECK REPORT

40. The committee received and reviewed the latest Healthcheck (KPIs) report (2025/26-Issue 05).

41. The Vice Principal (and Designated Safeguarding Lead) provided additional context on recent safeguarding case data in order to assist the committee's understanding of trends.

42. The committee noted and endorsed the updates to the monitoring of attendance data within the Healthcheck Report, recognising the improved clarity this provided for oversight and analysis.

43. The meeting concluded at 12:30.

Approved: Quality & Standards Committee meeting 25 June 2026