

**Minutes of the meeting of the additional SOUTH BANK COLLEGES BOARD
held on Wednesday 5 November 2025 at 2-4pm via Teams**

Present

Ruth Farwell (Chair)
Steve Balmont
Sue Dare (Vice Chair)
Chris French
Paul Kett
Sophia Okosun

Apologies

Issa Issa
Lydia Song

In attendance

Anna Bazeos, Board Secretary
Samuel Curtis, Group Company Secretary
Craig Hanlon-Smith, Principal LSBTC
Chris Knell, Vice-Principal, Finance and Operations
Monica Marongiu, Principal Lambeth College
Fiona Morey, CEO

1. Chair's Business

The Chair welcomed Trustees to the meeting and gave a special welcome to Chris, Paul, and Sophia at their first Board meeting.

2. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were made in respect of any agenda item, and no new declarations were noted.

3. Management Accounts

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

The Board noted the management accounts and agreed to receive further updates, which will include a dedicated reporting line on contingency levels going forward.

The Board received an update on learner recruitment and achievement. Achievement for 16–18-year-olds had improved by 4% over the last year (7% over two years), and adult achievement was 88.1%, mirroring 16–18 performance and sitting slightly above average. Apprenticeship achievement had improved to 36%, though remained significantly below the 60% accountability target. The Board noted ongoing actions to strengthen apprenticeship outcomes, including the appointment of specialist quality support.

Recruitment for 16–18-year-olds was reported to be above allocation. As no in-year growth funding would be available, the Board noted the need for careful financial planning, including class size adjustments and review of assessor capacity. The planned curriculum growth to 1,750 learners (against a budget for 1,650) was noted as achievable within current cost levels.

The Board received feedback from the annual self-assessment validation event. Judgements broadly aligned with the January Ofsted inspection, with special needs provision now assessed as outstanding. Apprenticeships remained underperforming and at risk of falling to Grade 4 if improvement does not accelerate. The full Self-Assessment Report will be presented for approval in December.

4. Pay Award

The Board discussed the proposed pay award of 4%, backdated to 1 August 2025, in line with the recommendation from the Association of Colleges (AoC).

The Board noted that the College Executive endorsed the proposal, citing recruitment and retention challenges. The Board questioned how the award compared across the sector. It was confirmed that most colleges offering pay awards were aligned with the 4% recommendation, and there was no widespread movement beyond this level.

The Board also noted feedback from the AoC Principals Network, where the University and College Union's demand for a 10% increase was viewed as unrealistic by many London colleges.

The Board approved the 4% pay award, backdated to 1 August 2025.

5. Partners & Subcontractors

The Board discussed the ongoing delivery of approximately £3 million of Adult Skills Fund provision through partners and subcontractors, noting that this reflected both the previous year's activity and the approved budget.

The Board considered the newly developed subcontracting policy, which had been revised following feedback from the July Board meeting. Trustees noted that the policy now provides clearer definitions of partners and subcontractors and places appropriate focus on both groups.

The Board noted that a full market engagement and procurement exercise is scheduled to commence in the spring, with the aim of securing multi-year contracts ahead of the next academic year.

The Board raised concerns regarding the current performance of Cultural Capital measures and the ongoing reliance on subcontracting, despite previously stated intentions to reduce such reliance over time. Trustees emphasised the importance of ensuring that subcontractors comply with the College's requirements relating to safeguarding, DBS checks, data protection, and equality and diversity, and highlighted the need for timely notification of any breaches.

The Board acknowledged the ongoing commitment to review the College's adult provision strategy, with a particular focus on 19+ provision and a phased reduction in subcontracting where feasible.

The Board requested further performance information relating to Cultural Capital, and it was agreed that the Vice Principal would provide updated performance metrics.

Action: CK to distribute further information relating to contracts and Cultural Capital by Monday 10 November.

The Board approved the partner and subcontracting arrangements with the specified partners and organisations, subject to review of the updated Cultural Capital data once provided and no concerning updates arising.

6. Brixton Lease

The Board received an update on the Brixton lease. It was confirmed that the lease formalised the existing occupancy arrangements and had been reviewed by both the estates team and legal advisors. The lease reflected a nominal value of £390k in the accounts.

The Board noted that the lease document was dated 2022 due to extended negotiations with the Department for Education, and that the site had been occupied since 2013 without a formal lease in place. A discrepancy between the lease valuation and the figures recorded in the management accounts was identified and will be reviewed.

The Board approved the recommendation for the Group CEO and/or Chair of the Board to sign the Brixton lease on behalf of South Bank Colleges.

7. Pathways and Partnerships

The Board received an update on the development of the Group strategy, noting that a strategic narrative would be launched internally in December and externally in January to guide future planning and resource decisions.

The Board discussed strengthening partnerships, supporting a targeted approach to local school engagement (including opportunities linked to the introduction of V Levels) and emphasising the importance of senior leader involvement. Employer engagement was also discussed, with the Board noting the need for a balanced, Group-wide approach, particularly in the context of potential changes to apprenticeship structures.

The Board endorsed the strategic direction and the proposed targeted engagement with schools and employers.

8. Any other business

The Board approved the appointment of the new Staff Trustee, Karlene Morrison-Briscoe.

Date of next meeting

Thursday 4 December 2025. 4-6pm at 1B16 Technopark

Confirmed as a true record



..... (Chair)