Kendal College

Governance Self-Assessment Report   2024/25

Quality Improvement Plan 2025/26

KEY STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

To provide outstanding governance in the achievement of the College's key strategic goals

1. Consistently deliver a high-quality learning experience and environment
2. Further develop and grow our partnerships and engagement, securing the best possible education and training for our community
3. Innovate and continuously improve our curriculum offer
4. Develop the business to ensure we are future proof and financially sustainable
5. Continually develop and invest in our people and teams, supporting learners and staff to be active partners in our work

BOARD KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

1. All members of the Corporation meet the performance indicators determined by its standing orders
2. There is evidenced quality improvement in governance through participation in the Governor Development & Improvement programme, training and strategic planning events, leading to greater understanding and challenge of key issues facing the College
3. The composition of Board membership ensures the right skills mix to ensure effective support and challenge is in place and that high aspirations are set for what learners can expect from the College
4. Teaching, learning & assessment is prioritised by the Board and scrutiny of the learner experience in both further and higher education provision is informed and thorough
5. The Board ensures controls and financial management are robust
6. The Board is able to monitor and hold senior management to account for the achievement of corporate objectives
7. The Board is able to make timely strategic decisions
8. The Board ensures that risk is proactively managed and monitored within the College
9. The Board fulfils its statutory duties and regulatory responsibilities

Summary of Strengths and Areas for Development

Key Strengths
- Skills and expertise of governors to shape strategic direction, challenge and support the for the senior team   - Common vision for sustainability and growth   - Strong Committee structure provides sufficient assurance in key areas   **Areas for Development**   - Appraisal and remuneration processes for Senior Post Holders   - Efficacy of board papers   - Increase board diversity

SELF-ASSESSMENT REPORT

Self-assessment of Kendal College Corporation's performance during 2024/25 has been based on a range of activities including individual governor review, review of the Board's overall performance, compliance with standing orders and committee terms of reference, as well as the AOC 2023 College Code of Good Governance. The focus of our self-assessment this year has been our progress since our external board review in 2023, and on our performance against the new code, adopted from September 2024. The Board self-assessment also contributes to the leadership and management section of the overall College self-assessment report and allows reflection on what works well and how the Board can continuously improve. Board members take part in the College SAR validation and formally approve the SAR at their October board meeting.

The Board meets in person but has the option of calling meetings via MSTeams, especially for committee and working group meetings. The saving of time for busy governors plus less requirement to book rooms in college has made this option a regular part of our processes. Several board members take up the option to join the meetings via Teams when working in other parts of the country. Board meetings continue to be seen as an opportunity for governors to visit and experience the College.

The Board continued to strive for outstanding performance and continuous improvement of the learner experience. Routine monitoring of student satisfaction and learner achievements were incorporated into the quality cycle and endorsed through assurances provided by three highly effective student governors. Understanding the student experience was a key priority for the Board over the year and will be carried forward into 2025/26 academic year through regular student voice updates at Board meetings.

Key strategic decision-making was evidenced throughout the year particularly in respect of the continuation of the refurbishment of the Westmorland Campus, financial challenges due to funding changes and reclassification and the drive to improve the quality of education following the Ofsted inspection of 2023.

KEY EVENTS 2024-25

Ofsted monitoring visit, Reasonable Progress achieved
Relocation of KC6th, Business and Access departments (approx. 200 students) to join Professional and Care Services provision at the Westmorland Campus
Appointment of a new Corporation Chair
Establishing the Deputy Principal position as a Senior Post Holder
Appointment of the Vice Principal as Chief Financial Officer and Senior Post Holder
Establishment of the Quality and Standards Committee
Recruitment of a new Principal
Retirement of previous Principal

The strategic plan 22-25, was due to be rewritten during the year, however, the board decided after the early retirement announcement of the Principal and following recruitment of a new Principal, to postpone the plan. It is for the new Principal, to work with the Corporation to create the strategic plan for 2026 and beyond. The strategy day in February was used to evaluate the progress of the College against the 22-25 plan and to highlight the sector influences on current performance.

The strategy day was held at the WMC, on the 28th of February and gave the board members the opportunity to have a full guided tour of the facilities and spaces. That was followed by an overview of strategic plan and performance to date from The Principal, a presentation on the role of the WMC in the College's growth plan and how income could be generated, then a presentation from the directors on the external influences that impact on the College.

A governor training event was held in April was held virtually to minimise the time commitment required from Governors, unfortunately the event had slightly limited impact due to technical difficulties.
The agenda included;
- a review of the performance of the board against the new governance code, with governor perspectives and opinions contributing to this governance self- assessment.
- a briefing for Governors on the implications for Kendal College of Martyn's Law and the progress of the leadership team in implementing the steps required for compliance.
- a presentation on Further Education Funding mechanisms and the impact on the College financial position to support governor understanding

At least six board members are members of the AOC regional networks on Finance, Audit and Quality of Education. Several governors accessed e-learning opportunities provided by AoC, and ETF including induction training for new Governors and webinars on specific aspects of governance, such as; The Economic Crime and Transparency Act, Manging Public Money, Generative AI, Supporting Teaching Learning and Assessment, Quality improvement processes, Ofsted preparation.

The Director of Governance attended briefings by the DfE as well as joining on-line conferences on governance and AoC regional Governance Professional's meetings. The Ofsted monitoring visit of October 2024 noted reasonable progress against the actions identified in the full inspection of 2023, and after a year of increased activity the board decided to formalise the Quality and Curriculum Working Group into the Quality and Standards Committee in June 2025.

During the year, the Board received presentations on, how the Education and Development Faculty meets the needs of students and stakeholders, the role of the skills and careers link governor and the learning opportunities for higher education students in Marine Biology.

Governors have undertaken one-to-one performance reviews with the Corporation Chair and Vice Chair to establish their own development needs, willingness to take on committee responsibility and to reflect on the effectiveness of the board as a whole. Governors reported high levels of satisfaction in how the Board operates, Board relationships and managing change. Time commitment was reported as a concern by some governors.

Chair's Performance

The performance of the Chair, since appointment in December 2024, was gauged through questions in an online survey, completed by nine governors.

The Chair received **consistently high ratings** across all areas of leadership and governance.
Most responses were **"Strongly Agree"** or **"Agree"**, with no "Disagree" or "Strongly Disagree" recorded in any category.

Strengths Identified
- Strategic management
- Strong leadership
- Structure and clarity
- Positive relationships with senior leaders

Areas for Improvement
Feedback was generally positive, with few suggestions for improvement, some governor's noted it's still **early days** in the Chair's tenure.
Suggestions included:
- Strengthening relationships with the **new Principal and SLT**
- Enhancing engagement with **local stakeholders**
- Continuing to build **structure and cohesion**

A check of compliance with the AoC Code of Good Governance for English College identified some areas of development, that the Board needs to approve and monitor the following strategies;
HR & Workforce Strategy,
Quality Strategy
Environmental & Sustainability Strategy

Each of these will be noted as areas for development in 2025/26 and included in the Board meetings schedule.

Diversity of the board has been increased this year in terms of gender and age, however, wider board diversity in terms of ethnicity and disability is needed to reflect the student population.

Committees have been effective this year and have met their responsibilities under their terms of reference and scheme of delegation. Each of the committees produced an annual report to the Board that reflected on their work. Search & Governance Committee continued to monitor membership and advised on recruitment based on the updated skills audit and inclusion.

No. of governor's recruited 24-25	No. of Governor resignations 24-25
5	7

Vacancies now include:

- Safeguarding lead governor (recruitment in progress)
- SEND lead governor (recruitment in progress)
- Leader of Further Education to advise QSC (recruitment in progress)
- Finance expert to lead the FRC
- HR expert to advise FRC

Attendance

Corporation attendance was 83%
Committee attendance was 89%.
Training event attendance was 74%

Changes to Structure of Corporation

The Remuneration element of the Corporation work had been distributed throughout the other Committee's at the end of the 23-24, this decision was reevaluated during 24-25, and with new guidance produced by the FEC on Senior post holder appraisal and remuneration, the decision was made to revive the committee with the Search and Governance Committee and dedicate at least one meeting a year to this work.

The Audit & Risk Committee (ARC) explored the areas of risk appetite and tolerance with proposals to share risk with other committees and identify risk owners. Internal audit was used effectively to provide assurance on key financial and business processes, leading to the development of a more robust monitoring tool for recommendations. ARC and Finance and Resources Committees recognised the failings in procurement as reported in the Financial Statements of 23-24 and commissioned an external independent report to establish the probable root cause of the lack of compliance. A full report was published in May 25 and shared with the Corporation and SLT. The recommendations from the report have led to a procurement action plan and increased scrutiny of processes at SLT and board level.

The Internal Auditor contact with ICCA finished at the end of this academic year, and they are replaced with WBG who were successful in winning a full tender for the work.

The Quality and Curriculum Working Group were established as a Committee in May 2025, named the Quality and Standards Committee (QSC) this formalised the support and challenge offered by the group to improve the quality of education at the College.

Results from Governor Reviews 24-25

Governors were asked how confident they felt that they had modelled expected board behaviours:

	Quite Confident	Extremely Confident
Objectivity	30%	70%
Honesty	20%	80%
Assertiveness	20%	80%
Professionalism	10%	90%
Integrity		100%
Accountability	20%	80%

Governors were asked to rate their impact in the following areas during 24-25:

	Minor	Significant	Major
Regulatory Compliance	14%	72%	14%
Sustainable Finance	14%	72%	14%
Stakeholder Engagement	54%	45%	
Strategic Direction	18%	73%	9%
Quality of Education	45%	45%	10%

Summary of the themes from the Governor Reviews carried out in June and July 2025

Commitment and Attendance
- Most governors reported **high attendance** and **positive self-assessments** of their behaviours and impact.
- Several governors expressed a **strong commitment** to continuing their roles, though a few noted potential changes due to personal or professional circumstances.

Governance and Board Functioning
- There is a **clear recognition of improvements** in board operations, leadership, and accountability over recent months.
- Governors highlighted the **need for continued rigour**, better integration between subcommittees, and more **strategic alignment**.
- Concerns were raised about the **quality and timeliness of board papers**, especially financial reports.

Subcommittee Engagement and Development
- Many governors are actively involved in or interested in joining subcommittees such as:
  - **Quality and Standards (QSC)**
  - **Audit and Risk (ARC)**
  - **Finance and Resources (FRC)**
  - **Task/Finish Group**
- There is a desire for **deep dives** into key topics at board meetings to enhance scrutiny and engagement.

Training and Development Needs
- Several governors identified a need for **further training**, particularly in:
  - Governance
  - Further Education (FE) sector knowledge
  - Ofsted preparation
- Governors are encouraged to seek out **webinars and courses** to build their expertise.

Leadership and Management Concerns
- Mixed views on the **college's leadership**—most hopeful about the incoming Principal, and their impact on leadership and management
- Financial sustainability and strategic planning were recurring concerns, especially around **budgeting and procurement**.

Staff and Student Wellbeing
- Governors expressed concern about **staff morale**, confidence, and the impact of pension changes.
- There is interest in **engaging more directly with staff and students**, especially in preparation for Ofsted.

Role Clarity and Time Commitment
- Some governors are **reviewing their roles** due to changing work commitments or uncertainty about future availability.
- There is a desire to **balance governance responsibilities** with professional roles, especially for staff-governors.

Quality Improvement Plan 2023/24

Ref	Current Area to be addressed	Performance Indicator	Actions	By Whom	By When	Update Position	Status
23-24.1	Retirement of the experienced Governance professional (GP)	Successful handover to the new GP	d corded in PR targets qualification achieved	CD/TB/ JT	July 2024	1. Handover carried out during June 23 2. Training identified, attended, and recorded 3. GP exam booked for October 2024	
23/24.2	Compliance with Code of Good Governance		1.	TB	June 2024	1. Compliance checked as part of annual review process summer 2024 2. As above 3. As above and reported through S&G committee 17/9/24 Areas of non-compliance to be prioritised in QIP for 2024/25	
23/24.3	Chair of the Corporation reached the end of their term	Succession plan in place	1. Advertise and recruit a Chair designate to allow for sufficient hand over	TB/KN/JT	March 24	1. Application to the DfE for recruitment funding (after advertising did not attract suitable candidates) 2. Peridot recruitment commenced search activities 3. 11 interested parties @ August 24	

Ref	Current Area to be addressed	Performance Indicator	Actions	By Whom	By When	Update Position	Status
23/24.4	SEND and Safeguarding Link governor roles are being covered in a temporary way	Strong link governors for Safeguarding and SEND on the board	1. Seek appropriately experienced individuals 2. Recruit and induct to the board	TB/KB/KN	January 24	1. SEND Governor appointed in February 2024 2. Safeguarding governor appointed in March 2024	
23/24.5	The current Chair leads on Quality of education and is due to retire	An appropriate governor is prepared to lead on quality	1. Appoint governors with FE Quality experience	TB/KB/KN	January 24	1. New governor appointed in November 2023 with FE and Quality experience 2. Governor joined the Quality and Curriculum Working Group in May 2024	
23/24.6	Financial information could be presented in a more visual way and with greater timeliness of response to issues. This is seen to have been slow to change.	Clear and transparent financial information provided to the board	1. Finance Director to provide monthly updates to the FRWG. (Finance and Resources Working Group) 2. FRWG to provide feedback to the board at each meeting 3. Information to be provided in an accessible way for non-finance governors	TS/ED/KN	Completed during 24-25	1. Finance team implemented iTrent a system that produces reports that present financial information in an accessible way. The Finance Manager developed a narrative report on the monthly accounts that was welcomed by the Finance Committee 2. Contribution analysis is forthcoming from Sept 25	

Quality Improvement Plan 2024/25

Ref	Area for Improvement	Performance Indicator	Actions	By Whom	By When	Update Position	Status
24-25.1	Environmental sustainability	<mark>Compliance with all areas of AoC code (section 8)</mark>	1. Carbon reduction and environmental sustainability strategy to be developed for board approval 1. Reporting to Board on progress above	KN/ JM	Dec 24	This remains a priority	🟥
24-25.2	Compliance with new Code of Good Governance (2023)	The board is fully compliant with the requirements and expectations of the code	1. Set up review process against new code 2. Identify areas of potential non-compliance 3. Put in place new processes to ensure evidence of "must" requirements 4. Review processes to meet "should" requirements	TB/JT	June 25	All governor reviews carried out in June and July 2025 against the new Code of Good Governance SAR identifies the areas of non-compliance	🟩
	Recruitment of a Chair and Vice Chair to the board	Robust recruitment process leads to strong board leadership	1. Apply for DfE funding for recruitment 2. Work with recruitment partners to formulate a robust process 3. Appoint and induct a new Chair and Vice Chair designates	TB KN	November 24	Completed actions 1-3 by November 24. R Trimble and M Seaton appointed,	🟩

Quality Improvement Plan 2025/26 (Draft)

Ref	Area for Improvement	Performance Indicator	Actions	By Whom	By When	Update Position	Status
	Approve and monitor a new Environmental sustainability strategy						
	Contribute to the shaping of a new College wide strategy						
	Monitor staff satisfaction with the aim of improving staff morale						
	Corporation succession planning; The Chair of ARC is due to retire at year end,						
	Monitoring of financial and procurement compliance and						