



Annual Accountability Statement 2024/25

Including Local Needs Duty

At Milton Keynes College Group we are deeply connected to the communities we serve. The courses we deliver, skills we impart and the experiences we offer our students are all shaped by our communities and a commitment to meeting local skills need. This accountability statement outlines how we connect with employers, other providers, and our community at both a strategic and operational level.

College Mission & Purpose

Delivering Fairer Futures in the communities we serve

The Milton Keynes College Group vision is to ‘use the power of education to create opportunities, champion talent, and build fairer futures.’ We do this by inspiring positive social change in the people and communities we serve through delivering exceptional learning experiences to transform lives, achieving our vision of a fairer future for all.

In 2021, aligned to our new purpose, we launched our Fairer Futures strategy to run through to 2026. This was informed by the Skills for Jobs White Paper and approved by our Board of Governors in Spring 2021. Our strategy is based around six aims:

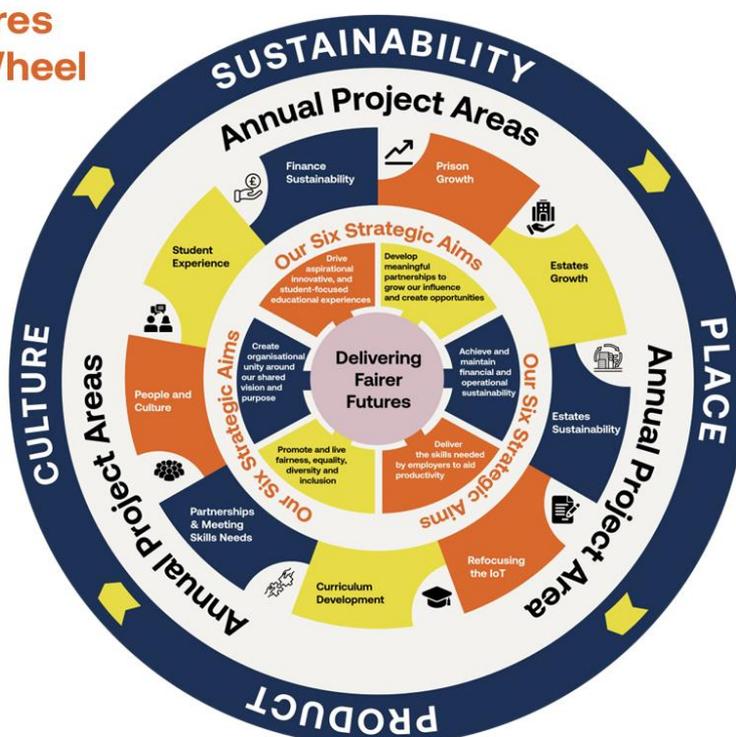
- 1) Drive aspirational, innovative and student focussed educational experiences.
- 2) Develop meaningful partnerships to grow our influence and create opportunities.
- 3) Achieve and maintain financial and operational sustainability.
- 4) Deliver the skills needed by employers to aid productivity.
- 5) Promote and live fairness, equality, diversity, and inclusion.
- 6) Create organisational unity around our shared vision and purpose.

Milton Keynes College Group uses a strategic wheel to drive organisational level priorities. This wheel was scrutinised and updated by senior leaders and Governors in 2023 to greater reflect priorities identified in our Local Skills Improvement Plan.

Embedded within this wheel are nine project areas which align to our Local Needs Duty, these include, Student Experience, Curriculum Development, and Partnerships & Meeting Skills Needs. The Board of Governors Strategic Priorities within each of these nine project areas are our Accountability Statement targets.

Delivering Fairer Futures Strategy Wheel

 MK College Group



In addition to our strategic wheel and as part of our Local Needs Duty, Milton Keynes College Group has developed a Skills Plan which articulates our longer-term commitment to meeting skills needs. This plan was approved by the Board and sets out our commitment to:

- A systematic and structured approach to embedding skills within our curriculum.
- Setting the skills agenda within Milton Keynes and influencing regional activity.

- Connecting employers with students to increase aspiration and remove barriers to employment.

This approach was praised by Ofsted in February 2024, when they reported *“The College makes a strong contribution to meeting skills needs”*.

Our provision is extremely important to the growth and ongoing development of Milton Keynes. 35% of young people in the city attend the College, making the College the most significant provider of education for young people, 35% of adults who access funding also learn through the College making us the largest provider of adult education, and 10% of apprenticeships (29% of under 19 apprenticeships) are with Milton Keynes College Group, making us the largest apprenticeships provider in the city. Post-16 education in Milton Keynes is shaped and defined by Milton Keynes College Group.

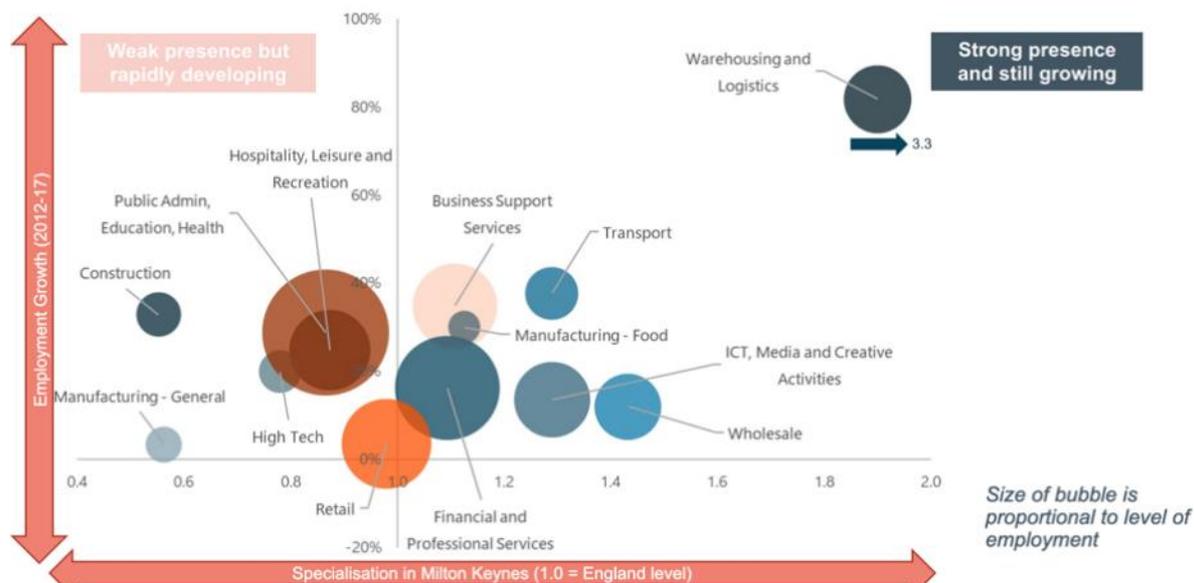
Context and place

Milton Keynes – a highly productive, growing city with pockets of deprivation

Milton Keynes is a brand-new city situated in the South-East Midlands. With a population of approximately 270,000 people and home to 12,765 businesses. The Milton Keynes economy is worth £14.03 billion with a GDP per worker of £73,439 – one of the highest in the country.

In terms of the profile of businesses in Milton Keynes, the city is distinct from other areas within the South-East Midlands region due to the prevalence of micro business (with 0-9 staff); these make up 90% of the businesses in Milton Keynes. SMEs form a much smaller group making up 9.4% of businesses. The city is also notable for the large number of global and national head offices; 75 businesses have more than 250 employees and include national brands such as Red Bull Racing, Network Rail, and Santander.

The graph below shows the Milton Keynes sector mix with logistics, Information and Communications Technology (ICT), business support and financial and professional services as strong specialist areas within the city.



Milton Keynes has a younger population than England as a whole with 27.4% of the population aged 19 and under, compared with 23.7% nationally. The city has a racially diverse population with 26.1% Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) increasing to 44% BME in the current student population. 25% of the population has English as a second language and 14% of pupils have Special Educational Needs (SEN).

Although as a city Milton Keynes is ranked 181st out of 326 regions in the deprivation index, this hides the 9 'Lower Super Output Areas' (LSOAs) which are within the 10% most deprived in England.

Milton Keynes is also a city on the move. The number of 16-19 year olds is predicted to increase by 30% within the next six years. Whilst school capacity is increasing to respond to this greater demand, the combination of demographic growth and increased market share should see the College plan for up to a 35% increase in 16-19 students by 2029.

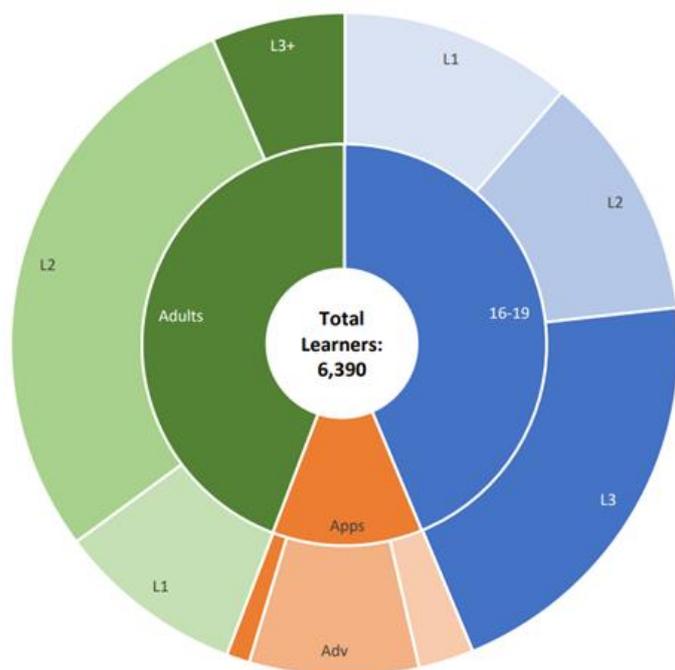
We are the largest provider of education to Milton Keynes residents

Milton Keynes College is situated across two main campuses at Chaffron Way, Milton Keynes and Bletchley. Our Bletchley site is also home to South Central Institute of Technology and the College operates a small sports venue in central Milton Keynes. 88% of our students live in Milton Keynes (including Bletchley), 4% come from Central Bedfordshire (largely in Leighton Buzzard) with small numbers of students from Buckinghamshire (2%) and Northamptonshire (2%). Therefore 96% of our students are from the South-

East Midlands, with 2% from Buckinghamshire.

The College attracted a total of 6,390 learners in the 2022/23 academic year (an increase of 840 since 2021/22). Of these, 44% were 16-19 funded, 12% were apprentices and 44% were adults.

Profile of Learners



GFE/Specialist Colleges



SE GFE/Specialist Colleges



In terms of scale, 35% of 16-19 year olds from Milton Keynes study at the College, 35% of adults accessing Adult Education Budget (AEB) study at the College and 10% of all apprenticeships in Milton Keynes are with the College. We are the largest provider of education to Milton Keynes residents.

What informs this accountability statement?

This statement is the culmination of the hundreds of hours spent building, leading and contributing to skills conversations within Milton Keynes.

We group stakeholders who help inform our accountability statement in four key segments: community, civic, education and employers. Below is a short summary of how we engage with each.

Community

We have strong relationships with a range of community groups and play an active role in our community. Milton Keynes College Group uses a Friends and Allies Network to discuss key issues impacting our students – recent themes have been knife crime and poverty. Whilst there are strategic partnerships with key local organisations such as the Milton Keynes Community Foundation and MK SNAP (a local adult learning disability charity) both of whom have Governors on our Board.

Civic

The College enjoys a strong relationship with Milton Keynes City Council and has recently established quarterly strategic conversations to embed collaboration in place planning, estate infrastructure, and mapping out the future of skills in Milton Keynes. We were a key contributor to the MK 2050 planning document and produce a joint Milton Keynes College and Milton Keynes City Council adult prospectus, giving residents of the city one place to access of their training requirements.

Regionally, the College has worked closely to support the transition of the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) into West Northants Council.

Education

Milton Keynes College has won sector acclaim for the collaborative approach to working with schools. As well as establishing a Careers Advisor Network designed to allow local school careers advisors to network and access Continuous Professional Development (CPD) opportunities, the College actively supports children in schools to access enhanced careers inspiration. Recent examples have included supporting students to attend the National Apprenticeship Show with preparation sessions to ensure they get the most out of the day, annual Teen Tech, and 'Big Yellow Bus' roadshows and live careers and skills data embedded into course information on the website. Indeed, Milton Keynes is one of the first cities to have all post-16 provision logged within Unifrog and accessible to all students and careers advisors.

Milton Keynes College is the chair of the Milton Keynes Post 16 Strategy Group, a collaboration between Milton Keynes City Council, local schools, and the College. This group regularly reviews student numbers, barriers to progression and ensuring that post-16 education is complementary, has clear progression pathways and aligns to local skills needs.

The College has also committed more time to developing links with Higher Education (HE) institutions. Milton Keynes remains something of a HE cold spot however the College works with Cranfield University and MK:U (who are South Central IoT anchor partners) and a strong relationship is emerging with the Open University as they explore an in-person university in the city. Relationships with these partners will continue to be a priority over the next year.

Employers

At Milton Keynes College we are an active and engaged partner within our employer community. Our lead for employer relationships is in a Non-Executive Director position at the Milton Keynes and Northamptonshire Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber are the South-East Midlands Employer Responsive Body (ERB) and as such we have been involved in all stages of the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP). As a result, we were the natural choice to lead on the execution of the Local Skills Improvement Fund (LSIF). We co-ordinate all colleges in the region to respond to LSIP priorities through the LSIF as well as leading on two of the larger projects (employer communications and digital) ourselves. This collaboration between the five colleges in South-East Midlands has enabled us to articulate a joined-up response to addressing regional skills needs rather than something that is disjointed or overlapping.

In addition, Milton Keynes College continues to host regular employer forums across sector areas. These engage a range of employer types and seek to identify a range of skills needs and any barriers to being able to recruit. Each sector has its own sector skills guide informed by external research and validated by employers themselves.

Our Institute of Technology has taken this model even further with employers providing visiting lecturers to co-deliver the curriculum and provide real life projects for students to work through.

The range of relationships above means we have a fully rounded view from which to develop our key priorities and target outcomes.

Our 2023/24 skills performance

Annual Project Area	Board Strategic Priorities for 2023/24	Contribution towards national, regional, and local priorities for learning and skills	Review of progress made
Student Experience	1. Continue to improve achievement rates, deliver Board Student Performance KPIs and deliver an Ofsted 'Good' outcome (if Ofsted arrive in the academic year).	Continuously improving achievement rates will increase the number of students with the higher-level skills needed by MK employers. A 'Good' Ofsted will help the College to continue to attract project funding to support growth.	The College remains on target to maintain its strong 3-year improvement trend in achievement rates. Ofsted assessed the College as 'Good' in February 2024 with adult and high needs assessed as 'Outstanding', and the contribution to meeting skills needs as 'Strong'. Maintaining our Ofsted Good outcome has enabled us to taking ownership of the regional response to LSIP priorities, lead the LSIF across the South-East Midlands (SEM) region, and bid for other funding opportunities to meet skills needs.
Curriculum Development	2. Reform our Level 3 curriculum.	Level 3 curriculum reform will see the College prioritise pathways that are linked to LSIP priorities. As example, we are developing new pathways in the digital, green energy, social science, and creative sectors.	The LSIP confirmed that our curriculum offer is aligned to local and regional skills needs. The College is continuing to roll T Levels: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In 2023/24 we delivered 186 starts (171 retained) across Digital, Business, Science, Construction, Engineering, and Childcare. In 2024/25 we are adding T Levels in Electric Vehicle and Care. The introduction of a new A Level offer, aligned to LSIP priorities, has been received positively by parents. Applications are strong and there are currently 150 offers for the 100 spaces from September 2024.
Refocusing the IoT	3. Develop and deliver IoT action plan, aligned to the approved DfE change request and grow student numbers to meet the DfE Licence Agreement.	South Central IoT reaching targets set by DfE will see an immediate injection of digital skills training within the region. If we achieve our targets, then over 400 students will gain higher level digital skills this year.	We agreed a refreshed SCIoT vision at the May 2024 Anchor Partner Strategy Group which includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The roll out of new Level 4 short courses aligned to LSIP priorities. The introduction of an Employer Advisory Board of local employers to focus the development of SCIoT on local and regional skills needs. Working to establish a new HE Anchor/Delivery partner for SCIoT. The SCIoT has delivered 576 starts so far in Academic Year 3 (2023/24) against a target of 687, across the national skills priorities of Digital, Engineering and Construction, an increase on Academic Years 1 and 2.

Financial Sustainability	4. Deliver Good ESFA Financial Health and maintain financial sustainability.	Ensuring our continued strong financial health will be important in securing project funding and in continuing to innovate our curriculum to meet local skills needs.	We maintained Good ESFA Financial Health. This has enabled us to invest in staff, the estate, and secure project funding including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leading the LSIF across CoSEM to secure c.£5m funding to deliver projects to meet LSIP priorities across SEM. Securing Skills Injection Funding to roll out 40 Engineering HTQs in 2024/25, and bidding for Skills Injection Funding to roll HTQs in Construction, Care, and Digital in 2025/26.
People and Culture	5. Develop a plan to source talent from outside the education sector and grow our own talent from within MKCG.	A real risk to our ability to meet skills needs is the people required to deliver technical training. Growing our own talent pipeline will ensure we can continue to expand our provision.	We have completed significant work to reduce the number of vacancies across the College Group. College staffing has increased by 25% over the past year including commencing delivery of an additional Prison Lot, recruiting for new prison contracts, appointing a specialist A Level Team, and appointing a new Executive Principal to lead the next stage of our curriculum reform to meet national, regional, and local skills priorities.
Prison Growth	6. Agree a bidding strategy and bid for Prison Education Services (PES), with an aim to retain our current market share, as a minimum.	Our prison education work not only provides a vital service, but it also gives us access to a national network of educators. Growing our offer would see us expand to meet these vital skills needs and help reduce reoffending.	The Board approved our Prison Education Services (PES) bidding strategy in October 2023, and we submitted tenders for all 11 PES Lots in November 2023. Despite the recent postponement of the start of the new PES Contracts, we are working closely with the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) to maintain the continuity of learning within our national contract across 30 prisons, delivering the skills needed to support offenders re-enter their communities and reduce re-offending.
Partnerships and Meetings Skills Needs	7. Lead LSIF across SEMLEP area and deliver two regional LSIF projects in 'digital skills gaps' and 'communication with employers'.	As LSIF lead we are taking ownership of the regional response to LSIP priorities. We are also leading on two key projects connecting to digital skills and communicating with employers.	MK College has led the 5 Colleges across the SEM area to deliver the LSIF regional response to the LSIP. The ' <i>communication with employers</i> ' project has been successfully implemented and we are on track to deliver ' <i>digital skills gaps</i> ' project as per plan. MK College is also building a Green Skills Centre, funded from the Bedford College Group LSIF project, focused on developing green skills to meet the need identified in the LSIP.
Estates Sustainability	8. Deliver the Capital Transformation Fund (CTF) project.	Successfully completing the CTF project will increase the capacity of usable estate and support reduction in energy	CTF Phase 1 has been completed, replacing most windows and the OLA works. This has had a significant impact on the quality of the learning and working environment at the Chaffron Way Campus, and improved insulation significantly. CTF Phase 2 will recommence in June 2024 covering the

		costs, allowing more investment in new courses.	media suite works and replacing remaining windows). The CTF project will be completed by the end of September 2024, as planned.
Estates Growth	9. Undertake a strategic estates review, planning how we increase our post 16 capacity to meet the needs of employers and LSIP priorities.	This strategic review will allow us to ensure that when we grow to meet demand, we do so in a way that provides value to taxpayers.	We procured specialist providers who have undertaken a detailed Utilisation Survey and a Transport and Access Study. These two studies are being used to inform an Estates Feasibility Study. Six options were presented to the Board in May 2024, for strategic steer. The College is now working with Milton Keynes City Council to explore options to increase post-16 capacity to meet the needs of employers aligned to LSIP priorities

Local Needs Duty

As part of meeting our Local Needs Duty we have reviewed how well Milton Keynes College Group met local skills needs in the 2023/24 academic year. Given that the year in review saw our LSIP published, and the College skills contribution externally assessed by Ofsted as ‘strong’ we are in a uniquely strong position to say that we are confident we are meeting skills need.

Our skills inspection highlighted that:

“Senior leaders work very effectively in partnership with numerous stakeholders to identify, understand and contribute to meeting skills needs in the city, region and nationally.”

“Leaders and managers use these excellent partnerships to develop an offer that aligns very closely with the local skills priorities and the needs of the region as reflected in their accountability agreement.”

Our collaborative and partnership led approach has supported us to act as a hub for skills conversations in the city and with the very real prospect of capacity issues at 16-19 and Milton Keynes finally having a credible plan for a new university, ensuring our focus does not slip over the next period is essential.

How we plan to contribute to national, regional, and local skills priorities in 2024/25

In collating our priorities for 2024/25 we have taken into account the key national skills priorities including construction, manufacturing, digital and technology, health and social care, and haulage and logistics – in fact these national skills priorities were all reflected in our LSIP alongside green skills and a need for better low-level general employability and communication skills.

To ensure true strategic alignment our priorities are also linked to the annual project areas in the College’s strategic wheel and areas for development connected to the Local Needs Duty and our own performance reviews. These priorities build on the progress made in 2023/24 to deliver our strategic plan objectives.

Annual project area	Board Strategic Priorities for 2024/25	2024/25 Measures
Student Experience	1. Deliver Year 1 of the revised Quality Strategy to drive improvement from a good to an outstanding student experience and student outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement a school level balanced scorecard from September 2024, with half termly reviews to monitor school performance and ensure this remains consistently good with a trajectory to outstanding, through targeted intervention and support.
Curriculum Development	2. Develop a 3-year curriculum plan to meet skills need, aligned with current Government Policy.	Develop a 3-year curriculum plan to include in Year 1: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commencing a new A Level provision from September 2024, with 100 starts in 2024/25 building to a total of 240 starts in 2025/26 (140 new starts and 100 second years). Increasing T level new starts from 130 in 2023/24 to 178 in 2024/25 across Digital, Business, Science, Construction, Childcare, Engineering, Electric Vehicle, and Care. Introducing new HTQs, with 40 Engineering HTQs starting in September 2024 and planning for HTQs in Care, Digital, and Construction to commence in September 2025. An initial Green Skills curriculum, in line with LSIP priorities, is in place by November 2024, to commence delivery of LSIF KPIs.

Institute of Technology	3. Implement the IoT refresh strategy (<i>subject to DfE Change Request approval</i>).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mobilise a new HE Anchor/Delivery partner. • Deliver the South Central IoT Academic Year 4 (2024/25) target of 863 starts across Digital, Engineering and Construction (an increase from 576 currently in 2023/24). • Increase South Central IoT Level 4 and 5 Digital and Engineering starts by 100% in 2024/25.
Financial Sustainability	4. Maintain Good ESFA Financial Health and work with the FE Commissioner (FEC), through Active Support, to continue to improve financial sustainability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake an FEC Curriculum Efficiency and Financial Sustainability Study (CEFSS) in Autumn 2024 and implement actions based on FEC recommendations. • Maintain Good ESFA Financial Health, increasing to at least 200 points in 2024/25.
People and Culture	5. Develop and implement a Strategic Workforce Plan, in line with our EDI Strategy, the 3 Year Curriculum Plan, the CEFSS Action Plan, and the Estates Plan.	<p>Agree a draft Strategic Workforce plan by March 2025, resulting in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Group staff vacancy rate consistently under 8% in 2024/25, with a reduced target agreed for 2025/26. • Group staff internal progression consistently above 10% in 2024/25, with an increased target agreed for 2025/26.
Prison Growth	6. Manage the transition from the Prison Education Framework (PEF) Contract to the new Prison Education Service (PES) contracts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver current PEF Contract extension, until 30 September 2025, in line with revised MoJ timelines. • Commence mobilisation of new PES contract, in line with revised MoJ timelines.
Partnerships and Meeting Skills Needs	7. Further define, manage, and grow college stakeholders and secure feedback to support delivery of the strategic plan.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake a 360 review with all College key stakeholders by May 2025. • Develop and implement a Stakeholder Engagement Plan in 2024/25.
Sustainability	8. Publish a Climate Action Plan by statutory deadline of 31 July 2025 and build a Green Skills Centre.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publish a draft Climate Action Plan by October 2024 and agree with the Board a final plan by December 2024, including a commitment to set targets aligned to our estates strategy to achieve the statutory requirement (net zero by 2050). • Open a new Green Skills Centre in 2024/25, in line with LSIF project.
Estates	9. Ensure the College estate is fit for purpose to deliver planned curriculum changes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publish a draft short term estates plan by October 2024 to detail initial plans for 2025/26 academic year in line with planned growth and curriculum reform.

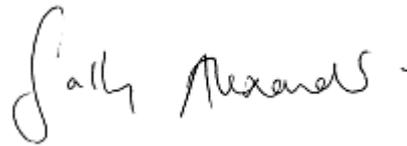
Corporation statement

On behalf of the Milton Keynes College Group Board of Governors, it is hereby confirmed that the plan as set out above reflects an agreed statement of purpose, aims, and objectives as approved by the Board at their meeting on 05 June 2024.

The plan will be published on the college's website and can be accessed from the following link: <https://mkcollege.ac.uk/governance/>



Ruby Parmar
Chair of Governors
Dated: 26 June 2024



Sally Alexander
CEO and Group Principal
Dated: 26 June 2024

Supporting documentation

[MK College Group Fairer Futures strategy](#)

[SEMLEP Skills Strategy](#)

[MK Council 2050 plan](#)

[MK College Group Financial Documents](#)

[Ofsted Inspection Reports](#)