Fairer Futures.

MK College Group

Annual Accountability Statement 2025/26 Including Local Needs Duty

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

We are now coming to the end of our Fairer Futures Strategy 2021 to 2026, which was informed by the Skills for Jobs White Paper. This 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 and include, Student Experience, Curriculum Development, and Partnerships & Meeting Skills Needs. Our Board of Governors Strategic Priorities within each of these nine project areas are our Accountability Statement targets.



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"*.

We are now developing our new Strategic plan for 2026 to 2031, which will be informed by stakeholder research with key Employer, Community, Civic and Education stakeholders to test progress against our current strategy and ensure our new strategic plan continues to deliver local 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, 26% of adults in the city who access funding also learn through the College making us the largest provider of adult education, and 9% of apprenticeships in the city (29% of under 19 apprenticeships) are with Milton Keynes College Group, making us the largest apprenticeship 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 growing rapidly, with the MK City Plan 2050 planning 63,000 new homes being built by 2050. This means the population is expected to increase from 299,000 currently to at least 410,000 by 2050. Milton Keynes is positioned at the centre of the new growth corridor linking Oxford, Milton Keynes, and Cambridge to create a new 'Silicon Valley'. Milton Keynes is the largest settlement in the Southeast of England outside London and is a city of national economic importance, with an economy worth £16.2bn in 2022 (larger than the city of Cardiff). With the Oxford to Milton Keynes section of East-West Rail opening later this year, Milton Keynes' economy will continue to grow.

The recent announcement that the Government has approved the first Universal Studios theme park in Europe, to be built near Bedford, will have significant impact on the local skills requirements and the local labour market, with work due to start later in 2025. This will deliver a £50 billion boost for the UK economy by 2055 and create 28,000 jobs across the creative, hospitality, and construction industries, before opening in 2031.

Home to approximately 12,500 businesses, Milton Keynes stands out in the South-East Midlands due to the dominance of micro businesses (0–9 employees), which make up 89% of all enterprises. Small and mediumsized enterprises (SMEs) account for 10.5%, while 0.6% are large businesses. The city also has one of the highest shares of new economy businesses, with 56.7 start-ups per 10,000 people (ranking third in the country). The city is home to 75+ major employers with over 250 staff, including national and global headquarters such as Red Bull Racing, Network Rail, and Santander.

According to the Public First Super Cluster Report, Milton Keynes will be a key enabler of the Oxford-Cambridge Growth Corridor, having the largest and most productive economy in the Growth Corridor – with a GVA per worker 128% of the UK average. Future economic focus of MK City Council includes the technology, AI, defence sectors and creative industries. Other areas of economic strength include Financial Services, Head Office and Management Consultancy, and Wholesale and Warehousing Support activities. In addition, a key area of growth is expected in the construction sector with the continued growth of Milton Keynes and the development of the Universal Theme Park.

The College is a member of the Get South Midlands Working Plan Partnership Group. This includes Local Authorities, DWP, Integrated Care Boards and Education providers who are working in partnership across the South Midlands to develop a whole system approach to addressing local labour market challenges.

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 28% Minoritised Ethnicities (ME) increasing to 51% ME 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.

Along with the local context, there are changes to the College's Prison Contract. Subject to contract, we will shortly start to mobilise the move from the Prison Education Framework (PEF) Contracts to the new Prison Education Services (PES) Contracts. This will see a change in the regions where we deliver prison education and a large-scale TUPE process, to enable the new contracts to commence from October 2025, and run initially until September 2029.

We are the largest provider of education to Milton Keynes residents

Milton Keynes College works across two main campuses at Chaffron Way, Milton Keynes and Bletchley. Our Bletchley site is home to South Central Institute of Technology, and we operate a small city centre sports venue.



Profile of Learners

The College attracted a total of 6,460 learners in the 2023/24 academic year (an increase of 910 since 2021/22). Of these, 50% were 16-19 funded, 12% were apprentices, and 38% were adults.

2025-26 Accountability Statement FINAL_signed Page 5 of 16

In particular, 16-19 student numbers have increased from 2,770 in 2021/22 to 3,635 in 2024/25. Application numbers for 2025/26 are strong and 16-19 student numbers are expected to exceed 4,000 within the next 12 to 24 months and remain at least at this level until 2032. The College is seeing similar growth in apprenticeships, which have grown from c.300 in 2018/19 to over 800 in 2024/25. The current focus on apprenticeships means these numbers will continue to grow at the same trajectory as 16-19 growth.

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: Employers, Community, Civic, and Education. Below is a short summary of how we engage with each.

Employers

At Milton Keynes College we are an active and engaged partner within our employer community. Our lead for employer relationships is President at the Milton Keynes and Northamptonshire Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber are the South-East Midlands Employer Responsive Body (ERB) and as such we were 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-ordinated 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 (CoSEM) has enabled us to articulate a joined-up response to addressing regional skills needs.

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.

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 introduction of an Employer Advisory Board has strengthened employer participation enabling local employers to identify key areas and projects that develop the wider eco system to drive skills development.

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

Community

We have strong relationships with a range of community groups and play an active role in our community. For the past three years we have held highly successful College in the Community Days. On 02 April 2025 over 1,100 students and staff volunteered across over 50 community sites, with social value calculated at over £133,000. The strength of our impact on our community is then measured through our Annual Community Impact Report, with the latest report published on 29 April 2025. Milton Keynes College Group uses a Friends and Allies Network to discuss key issues impacting our students. The network is solutions focussed and addresses relevant topics. Whilst there are strategic partnerships with key local organisations such as the YMCA, SOFEA, Arthur Ellis, and the Milton Keynes Community Foundation, whom also has a Governor on our Board.

Civic

The College enjoys a strong relationship with Milton Keynes City Council and holds 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.

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. 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 chairs the Milton Keynes Post 16 Strategy Group, is actively engaged in two new groups to review post-16 planning across Milton Keynes and attends the MK Secondary Heads Group – these are all collaborations between Milton Keynes City Council, local schools, and the College. These groups regularly review 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 is also committed to developing links with Higher Education (HE) institutions. Milton Keynes remains 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. Working in collaboration these partners, led by the Open University, are developing a city-wide civic agreement which is a public declaration of a collaborative programme of work covering innovation, skills and sustainable growth.

From February 2025 we have committed to working with both primary and secondary schools in Milton Keynes and the surrounding area to promote careers and opportunities in STEM subjects in partnership with Red Bull Technology. This programme reaching more than 2,000 young people in an academic year links the education system raising aspiration in key areas.

Annual project area	Board Strategic Priorities for 2024/25	2024/25 Measures	Review of progress made
Student Experience	 Deliver Year 1 of the revised Quality Strategy to drive improvement from a good to an outstanding student experience and student outcomes 	 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. 	 A school level balanced scorecard with 68 measures was introduced in September 2024. This is being monitored by 6 Curriculum Progress Review (CPR) meetings over the academic year, with targeted intervention and support for lower performing areas. At CPR 5: The quality of provision was assessed to be 1.76, and on target for achieving 1.6 by year end. 16-19 in year retention was 95%, 5 percentage points above the 2024/25 KPI and 3% above the sector.

Our 2024/25 skills performance

2025-26 Accountability Statement FINAL_signed Page 8 of 16

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: 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, Businees Sainment 	 Strong and improving student feedback with student satisfaction for 16-18 at 92%, Adult at 95%, Apprenticeships at 97%, HE at 90%, and Prisons at 93%. The Curriculum Strategy and 3- year curriculum plan is in place The new A Level provision has 65 students currently enrolled against a target of 100. 190 year 1 and 2 A Level starts are planned for 2025/26, with strong applications at c.600. There are 230 T-Level students enrolled currently in 2024/25 across Digital, Business, Science, Construction, Childcare, Engineering, Electric Vehicle, and Care. New Engineering HTQs were introduced in September 2024. There are currently 34 students enrolled and making good progress. HTQs in Care and
	2 Implement the	 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. 	Construction will commence in September 2025. The Green Skills Centre was launched on 18/10/24. The initial Green Skills curriculum has been developed with students starting on adult funded courses from January 2025.
Institute of Technology	3. Implement the IoT refresh strategy (subject to DfE	Mobilise a new HE Anchor/Delivery partner.	In 2024/25, DfE approved the Change Request to establish a new HE Anchor / Delivery Partner for South Central IoT

2025-26 Accountability Statement FINAL_signed Page 9 of 16

		Change Request approval).	 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. Mobilisation of the new HE Anchor/ Delivery Partner has been slowed due to IoT policy changes in 2024/25 IoT starts have increased to 635 against the target of 863 (excluding new HE Anchor / Delivery Partner starts).
Financial Sustainability	4.	Maintain Good ESFA Financial Health and work with the FE Commissioner (FEC), through Active Support, to continue to improve financial sustainability.	 Undertake FEC Curriculum Efficiency and Financial Sustainability Support (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. A positive CEFSS visit took place on 16/01/25, with the FEC Team. The CEFSS Report has been received and the CEFSS Action Plan is being delivered by the College Senior Team. The 2024/25 budget, approved by Board, planned to deliver Good ESFA Financial Health with 200 Points. 2024/25 Period 9 Management Accounts show Good Financial Health at 230 points, and we remain on target to deliver the Board KPIs by year end.
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.	Agree a draft Strategic Workforce plan by March 2025, resulting in:The People Strategy 2025 to 2031 has been developed and was approved by Board on 04/06/25.• A Group staff vacancy rate consistently under 8% in 2024/25, with a reduced target agreed for 2025/26.• The combined vacancy rate across the College is 2.9% This has been reduced steadily across 2024/25 and is the lowest the vacancy rate has been since pre-pandemic• Group staff internal progression consistently above 10% in 2024/25, with an increased target agreed for 2025/26.• The Group staff internal progression rate is 12.5%, with above the KPI since September 2024.
Prison Growth	6.	Manage the transition from the Prison	 Deliver current PEF Contract The PEF Contract Extension Variation was signed by the College and the MoJ. Delivery of

2025-26 Accountability Statement FINAL_signed Page 10 of 16

	Education Framework (PEF) Contract to the new Prison Education Service (PES) contracts.	 September 2025, in line with revised MoJ timelines. Commence mobilisation of new PES contract, in line with revised MoJ timelines. PES Call Off contracts have been provisionally awarded. This remains Commercial in Confidence until contracts are signed by both parties, although subject to contract, the College has secured PES contracts at a similar scale to the current PEF Contract.
Partnerships and Meeting Skills Needs	7. Further define, manage, and grow college stakeholders and secure feedback to support delivery of the strategic plan.	 Undertake a 360 review with all College key stakeholders by May 2025. Develop and implement a Stakeholder The College is completing a 360 review with Key Stakeholders (Employers, Community, Civic and Education) by July 2025, to inform the development of its new Strategic Plan 2026 to 2031 A new Stakeholder Engagement Plan has been developed for Board approval on 16 July 2025.
Sustainability	8. Publish a Climate Action Plan by statutory deadline of 31 July 2025 and build a Green Skills Centre.	 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. The MKCG Climate Action Plan was launched in January 2025, ahead of the 31 July 2025 statutory deadline. Climate Action Plan targets will go to Board for approval in December 2025, to enable baselining following year 1. The LSIF funded Green Skills Centre was launched on 18/10/24.
Estates	9. Ensure the College estate is fit for purpose to deliver planned curriculum changes.	 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. The College has undertaken a Strategic Estates Review to support growth in post-16 capacity. The Estates Plan was approved by the Board the Board on 06/11/24. On 12/02/25 the College secured £6.1m of MK City Council Tariff Funding to deliver Estates Plan Phase 1 and increase post-16 capacity by c.300 full time students.

	• Capital work is on target to deliver the Phase 1 by September 2025.
--	---

How we plan to contribute to national, regional, and local skills priorities in 2025/26

In collating our priorities for 2025/26 we have taken into account the National Skills Priorities including advanced manufacturing, creative industries, defence, digital and technologies, financial services, life sciences, professional and business services, clean energy industries, construction, and health. These National Skills Priorities were all reflected in our LSIP alongside green skills, construction, digital literacy at all levels and digital technical skills and a need for better low-level general employability and communication skills.

To ensure true strategic alignment our Accountability Statement priorities are our Board of Governors Annual Strategic Priorities. These build on the progress made in 2024/25 to deliver our strategic plan objectives.

Annual	Board Strategic Priorities for	2025/26 Measures
project area	2025/26	
Student Experience	• Deliver Year 2 of the Quality Strategy to drive improvement from a good to an extraordinary student experience and student outcomes	 Campus average quality score of 1.5 by July 2026. Prison Services average quality score of 2.0 by July 2026. 88% of teaching and learning is good or better. 90% of students' progress into positive destinations (employment and further learning).
Curriculum Development	• Evolve the Curriculum Strategy to meet new local, regional, and National Skills needs to deliver anticipated growth	 Curriculum Strategy is updated by October 2025, to reflect new National Skills Priorities and evolving local need (including Universal). Ensure the percentage of College starts on National Skills Priority Areas remains above the 2023/24 national FE average of 30.4%. Increase total College A Levels from 65 in 2024/25 to 190 in 2025/26. Increase total College T Levels from 230 in 2024/25 to 244 in 2025/26. Increase total College HTQs from 34 in 2024/25 to 55 in 2025/26 (in Engineering, Construction and Care).

		• Increase total College Apprenticeships from 801 in 2024/25 to 900 in 2025/26.
Institute of Technology	 Successful completion of the initial Licence Agreement and work with DfE to explore re-licensing up to July 2028 	 Deliver the South Central IoT Academic Year 5 (2025/26) target of 979 starts across Digital, Engineering and Construction (an increase from 635 currently in 2024/25). At least 85% of SCIoT students are at Level 4 and above, in Academic Year 5. A recommendation is taken to Board on SCIoT relicensing by July 2026.
Financial Sustainability	• Deliver Good Financial Health and deliver efficiencies to improve EBITDA and current ratio.	 For 2025/26 ensure: An EBITDA above 6%. A current ratio above 1.15. A staff/income ratio below 70% (subject to new PES contracts)
People and Culture	• Implement the People Strategy 2025-2031, to ensure a workforce of the right size, shape, cost, and agility to enable growth to meet Local and National Skills Priorities.	 Reduce staff turnover on campus to 14% and in Prisons to 25% in 2025/26. Reduce the Group staff vacancy rate to under 5% in 2025/26 (post PES TUPE), with a vacancy rate below 1% by 2028. Maintain the Group staff internal progression to consistently above 12% in 2025/26. Achieve an overall Peakon Staff Satisfaction score of 8.0 in 2025/26.
Prison Growth	• Commence and deliver new PES contracts (subject to contract).	 The contract is mobilised by 30 September 2025. Contract Year 1 KPIs are delivered (01 October 2025 to 31 March 2026).
Partnerships and Meeting Skills Needs	 Establish new strategic partnerships to meet local and regional growth needs 	 Develop a strategic approach for Universal during 2025/26. Work with City partners to agree a Milton Keynes Civic University Agreement during 2025/26 Work with the Get South Midlands Working Plan Partnership Group to support the development of a Collaboration Plan by September 2025. Continue to work with partners to position the College, ready for devolution.
Sustainability	• Deliver the Climate Action Plan, in line with the 2025/26 delivery programme	 By December 2025, the Board approve KPIs which include: Further embedding sustainability into curriculum, including new sustainability courses and staff CPD. Developing the pipeline of capital projects to decarbonise in line with our net zero pledge.

		• Delivering at least one student-led project for each CAP ambition.
Estates	Revisit the MK College Group Estates Strategy in line with the new Strategic Plan 2026-2031, including digital and partnership delivery approaches	Updated MK College Group Estates Strategy in place by July 2026 to enable growth to meet Local and National Skills Priorities.

Local Needs Duty

As part of meeting our Local Needs Duty we reviewed in detail how well Milton Keynes College Group met local skills needs in during 2023/24. This was the year our LSIP published, and the College skills contribution was externally assessed by Ofsted as 'strong'. These evidenced that we were meeting skills need. Our 2024 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."

Based on the performance detailed in this Accountability Statement we have continued to meet Local Skills needs in 2024/25 and have set our priorities to continue to do so in 2025/26.

To provide continued assurance and support the development of the new Strategic Plan for 2026 to 2031, the College is undertaking detailed research with Employer, Community, Civic and Education stakeholders. This will enable us to test progress against our current strategy, our contribution to meeting skills needs, and the requirements for our new Strategic Plan. In addition, the College CEO is chair of Colleges of South East Midlands (CoSEM) who meet quarterly, enabling strategic planning and joint leadership on key project areas. Through CoSEM we will work with other CEOs, and potentially CoSEM Boards of Governors, to continue to develop a regional approach to Local Needs Duty, working collaboratively to meet the needs of the LSIP and the National Skills Priorities.

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 04 June 2025.

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: 05 June 2025

fally Alexands -

Sally Alexander CEO and Group Principal Dated: 05 June 2025

Supporting documentation

MK College Group Fairer Futures strategy

SEMLEP Skills Strategy

MK Council Strategy for 2050

MK College Group Financial Documents

Ofsted Inspection Reports