KENDAL COLLEGE

External Board Review: May 2023

There is strong evidence that the Board is effective and consistently impacts positively on college effectiveness and outcomes.

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Executive Summary

This External Board Review is provided to support the further development of governance arrangements at Kendal College. It has been delivered by the Association of Colleges AoC and is based on a pilot review framework developed by the AoC and ETF.

The report provides a general review of governance arrangements through an assessment against three main dimensions of governance: the **composition of the board, the structure of the board** and the **interaction** between governors and with the executive. The report will draw out high level strengths and recommend areas for development.

A draft of this report has been shared with the Chair, CEO and Clerk of the Corporation to ensure it offers a fair reflection of current governance arrangements.

The overall conclusion is that there is **strong evidence that the Board is effective and consistently impacts positively on college effectiveness and outcomes**.

Fig 1: Summary of Strengths and Areas for Development

	STRENGTH	AREA FOR DEVELOPMENT
BOARD COMPOSITION	A well-balanced board, with a good recruitment process and clear analysis of skills and experience. A recent infusion of new governor talent including additional finance expertise	Need to substantively fill the Safeguarding lead role and ensure adequate Board capacity to address quality and workforce issues. Continue to plan for Chair succession. Maintain a focus on equality, diversity and inclusion.
BOARD STRUCTURE	Governing arrangements are clear and well managed by a well organised and highly experienced Governance Professional Papers are detailed and there is an opportunity to ask	Financial information could be presented in a more visual way. Board discussions could focus more sharply on strategic issues and the most important risks including quality concerns.

	questions ahead of the Board meeting. The Committees and Corporation are well chaired with open discussion and good questioning. Improved Risk management Regular evaluation of governance and developmental plan in place.	Actively support and develop the person taking on the GP role to ensure good governance arrangements are maintained. The development of a strategic Balanced Scorecard and Finance Scorecard should be considered. The development of a Board Assurance Framework to give improved confidence in overall assurance.
BOARD INTERACTION	The triumvirate of Chair, CEO and Clerk have established a very effective relationship. There is a culture of openness challenge, trust and support. The Executive value the contribution governors make. There has been a very positive change in culture under the current Principal and Chair. There is strong evidence of collective responsibility.	There may be an opportunity for the Board to operate more strategically, although recent big decisions were taken on capital and estates. Encouraging governors to engage more actively in the life of the college beyond the formal meeting schedule.

The review could not have taken place without the open and constructive engagement of all those who took part. Particular thanks go to Carole Drury, the College Governance Professional, whose wisdom was invaluable and who has worked effectively to ensure that arrangements have been smooth and efficient.

Our Approach

This External Board Review (EBR) was undertaken by Simon Perryman. Simon is the chair of Barnsley College, a National Leader of Governance appointed by the office of the FE Commissioner and the chair of the AoC National Chairs Council. The work took place in May 2023.

The review follows the published AoC framework for FE College External Board Reviews as shown in Figure 2 below. This framework has been developed taking account of Charity Commission guidance, the Ofsted Inspection Framework, the AoC Code of Good Governance and the DfE's Guidance on External Board Reviews.

The framework has 3 main areas for evaluation known as Board Dimensions – namely, Composition, Structure and Interaction. Evidence is gathered from a variety of sources and triangulated to draw findings around an overarching question for each Board Dimension.

Composition

1. What attributes (skills, knowledge, mindset/attitude) do members of the Board possess currently and what additional attributes would allow the Board to better meet its objectives?

Structure

2. Do the current Board processes and structures equip members to optimally engage with each other to deliver the objectives effectively, with transparency and in compliance with regulations?

Interaction

3. Does the Board's culture and interactions between Board members allow for the most effective deployment of individuals and collective skills to meet the College's goals?

Overall Board effectiveness focusses on the core functions of the Board as a Governing Body and the extent to which culture delivers 9 key outcomes which characterize highly effective boards. These are; student experience, integrity, reflectiveness, financial soundness, quality, strategic leadership, inclusivity and diversity, collective accountability and responsiveness.

Fig. 2: Overall Model for Assessing Board Effectiveness
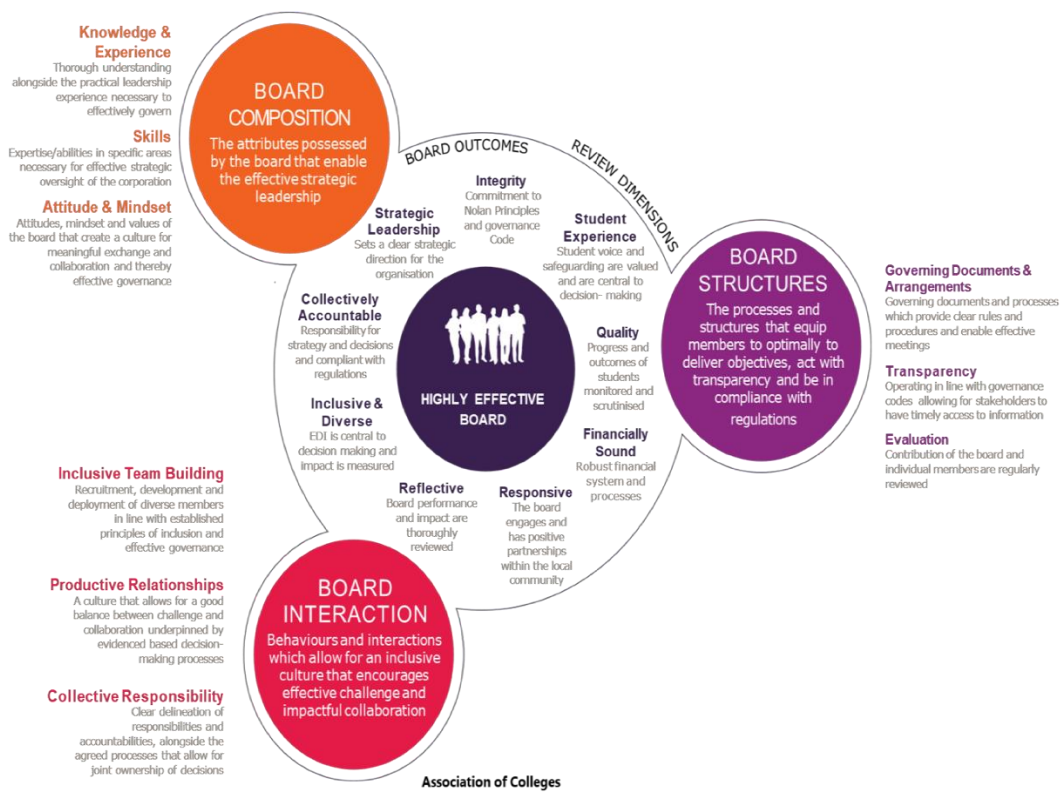
Review Process

The seven-stage approach undertaken in this EBR is shown in Figure 3. **Fig. 3: 7 stage Approach to undertaking the External Board Review**

The EBR process involved:

- An initial scoping meeting on 15 March 2023 involving the Chair, CEO and Governance Professional GP. The college commissioned a general review without a specific area of focus. The agreed timeline for the EBR was agreed as set out in Appendix A.
- An online survey to Board members. This was available from 12th to 26th April 2023. 9 Governors responded.
- A desk top review of key college documentation. This was made available electronically.
- Interviews were conducted with; 8 independent members of the Board (the Chair, Vice Chair, Chairs of Audit and Risk, Search and Governance and Finance and Resources Working Group and 3 other external Governors) as well as the CEO and GP.
- Observation of the College's Board meeting on 17 May 2023, Audit and Risk on 4 May 2023 and Search and Governance Committee on 9 May 2023.
- Following moderation, the draft report was shared with the College on 31.05.23and adjusted to take account of feedback.
- A follow up visit to be scheduled in 6 months' time..

Background and Context

Kendal College is a general further education college that is the main provider of post 16 education in the town and local area.

Detail

Kendal College has 3 campuses in Kendal, the main Milnthorpe Rd site, the Arts campus and a new facility being developed at the Westmorland Centre.

The college provides vocational programmes, A Levels, apprenticeships and a small amount of Higher Education. There are approximately 3,700 students, (1600 16-18, 2000 adults, 1060 apprentices) and 225 staff. The college was graded as Good in an Ofsted inspection in 2017. It has a particularly strong reputation for its catering and hospitality training including an academy with .a renowned local chef.

The college had an income of approx. £14m in 2021/22. Financial health is Good. The pay budget for 22/23 is 67.4% of income. Student satisfaction measures are all over 90%. The College is currently ranked 'outstanding' (25th of 233 Colleges) for Employer Ratings and 9th of 99 for Apprentice Ratings but staff satisfaction has dipped to 66% for management style and 62% for communications.

The College was one of the first to commission an EBR from the AoC and is keen to use the opportunity for learning that it provides. It has adopted the AoC Code of Good Governance and undertakes an internal review of governance each year.

The Corporation is supported by Audit and Risk, Search and Governance and Remuneration Committees. Corporation attendance is currently 85% which is in line with expectations, 87% at Audit and Risk and 90% at Search and Governance. Average overall attendance including for training and committees is 75%. There have not been problems with quoracy.

This report reviews key findings against each of the "Board Dimensions" of Composition, Structures and Interaction before concluding with a judgement of overall effectiveness.

Board Composition

Board Composition attributes possessed by the Board that enable effective strategic leadership.

Board composition requires a mix of people with different attributes to ensure that the Board provides strategic leadership as well as meeting its statutory and other requirements. This analysis of the Board's composition focuses on people and attributes and the central question:

What attributes (skills, knowledge, mindset/attitude) does the Board of Kendal College possess currently and what additional attributes would it need to meet its objectives?

Background

The Board currently comprises 16 governors, including 11 independent governors, 2 staff, 2 students and the Principal. There is, in addition, a co-opted member on the Finance and Resources Working Group.

Analysis and Findings

Knowledge, experience and skills

The College's policy on recruitment and selection of Board members provides for recruitment in a variety of ways – including through personal referral and self-nomination with an invitation permanently on the governance page of the college website. Four new independent governors have been appointed in the last 6 months, including one, identified through Peridot, with DfE support, to strengthen financial and audit skills on the board. All have had a full induction programme including meetings with the Chair, Principal and Clerk. Safeguarding and Prevent training is mandatory. Governors are signposted to other training and development opportunities including use of the ETF online training platform and there is an annual CPD day, most recently held in April 2023.

The Board (through its Search and Governance Committee S&G) carefully considers the range of skills and experience it is able to bring to the Corporation and its Committees. There is a detailed skills audit in place (summary presented to the Spring '23 S&G) that shows levels of skills capability against 12 criteria relating to educational character and mission, 8 criteria relating to finance and resources, 2 criteria on quality strategy and 3 criteria for setting and monitoring the framework for pay and conditions of staff. This was updated for the May meeting of the S&G to include the skills of the 3 most recent governors. The meeting confirmed the need to appoint a governor for the SEND and safeguarding link governor role, to replace the stand-in governor who is currently supporting this critical role. The meeting noted the improved gender balance of the board

following recent appointments and the breadth of the age profile of governors. Ethnicity of the board was seen to be in line with both the college and local community.

The survey of Board members confirmed the view that there was a good age spread and improving gender balance, (4 of 6 appointed in the last 6 months). The Board was well covered in terms of experience and expertise with a good mix of public and private sector, finance, education and business experience. 100% of members felt the full range of skills was available to manage organisational change, finances, risk and consider learner needs. 100% felt they fully observed the Nolan principals, agreed that the quality of student experience is central, valued partnership and saw the value of collaborative working, equality and diversity, Safeguarding and Prevent. One (of 9) governors questioned the robustness of financial scrutiny and one questioned how well the board listened to staff.

The table at Fig.4 shows the time that current governors have spent on the Board of the Corporation. Only two governors, the Chair and Vice Chair, are currently in their second term. The Chair of Audit and Risk has 3 years' experience on the Board and the Chair of Search and Governance, just under 3 years' experience.

Figure 4: Time spent on the Board.

Years on Board	<1	1-2	2-3	3-4	4-5	5-6	6-7	7-8	
Independent Governors	4	3		2	1			1	11
Staff Governors	1			1					2
Student Governors	2								2
Principal									1
TOTAL	7	3		3	1			1	16

Discussions with board members drew out the following points:

- This is a well-balanced board with a good range of skills and experience.
- The recent influx of new governors has been welcomed, bringing fresh insights and greater challenge, for example the governor appointed, with DfE support, in December 2022 to bring professional accountancy skills to strengthen Audit and Risk and the Finance and Resources Working Group. Two further governors appointed in March 2023.
- The Chair of the Corporation and Chair of Audit and Risk were seen to have strong expertise, depth of experience and complimentary skillsets.

- The appointments process had been well thought out and "tightened up" from previous appointments.
- Induction and training arrangements are seen to be effective. Arrangements as set out above.
- The governors are "*a good group. Their heart is with Kendal*".

The following issues were identified:

- The Board is quite light on governor experience, with only 4 governors having more than 2 years on the Board. This could be a risk in overloading the more senior governors.
- Gender balance is improving but still male dominated and a diversity challenge remains in relation to other protected characteristics, especially when the current student governors leave this Summer.
- The imminent retirement of the current Governance Professional will leave a large gap in terms of knowledge and experience, including on the history of the college. An existing senior manager is taking on this role from August 23 and hand over arrangements are in place.
- The Chair is coming to the end of his second term in February '24. Succession arrangements are beginning to be discussed and it is possible the current Chair may indicate his willingness to continue in the role. The Board is clear that people would normally only serve 2 terms, but that this may be extended in exceptional circumstances.
- The Chair would like to improve governor insight through closer day to day contact with the college. He would also like to bring more senior business people onto the board and has recently been successful in attracting the operations director of a large local business.
- The Safeguarding and SEND link governor role needs to be urgently filled on a more permanent basis by someone with appropriate skills and experience.
- The Chair currently leads on quality and curriculum issues because of his specialist expertise on skills development. This may be a risk if he does decide to leave at the end of his second term.

Attitude and mindset

The overriding mindset of Governors demonstrated at meetings and in interviews was open, supportive, inquisitive and constructively challenging. Their behaviour towards one another and towards the executive demonstrated a commitment to the Nolan principles. They were clearly motivated by a desire to improve the lives of learners and asked constructive and thought-provoking questions to gain assurance and support college progress, such as "*do we need to create a strategic space to address more deeply entrenched problems*".

Conclusions

The Review has identified that **Board Composition is strong but with some areas for development**. The following table summarises strengths and possible area for development:

Fig 5: BOARD COMPOSITION

STRENGTH	AREA FOR DEVELOPMENT
1. Process for identifying skills gaps and filling Board vacancies	1. Clarify the succession plan for Chairing the Corporation.
2. The open and collaborative mindset of the Board as evidenced by observation of meetings of the Corporation, Audit and Risk Committee and Search and Governance Committee.	2. Identify and urgently fill the Safeguarding link governor role on a more permanent basis
3. Strength in depth at Board and Audit Committee Chair level	3. Identify who will be in a position to lead on quality and curriculum issues when the Chair steps down and ensure adequate governor capacity on quality and workforce issues.
4. A good balance of technical skills and experience	4 Continue to review equality, diversity and inclusion to ensure diversity of thought and perspective is brought to the Board table.
5. Recent infusion of new governors bringing stronger financial/audit skills and enhancing gender balance	

Board Structure

Processes and structures that equip members to optimally deliver College objectives.

Board structures are the processes and arrangements that provide the space and tools for a Board to deliver College objectives. Analysis of Board structure focuses on structural arrangements and process and the central question: *Do current Board structures equip Governors at Kendal College to optimally engage with each other to deliver the College objectives effectively, with transparency and in compliance with Regulations?*

Background

The College operates with 3 committees – Audit and Risk, Search & Governance and Remuneration. There is also a Finance Working Group, established during Covid, that has remained in place. The functions of conventional Quality and Standards Committee are taken directly by the Corporation Board.

The 2023/4 meetings schedule was circulated during this review. It shows plans for 8 Corporation meetings, including a strategic planning event in February 24 and an annual training event in April '24. There are termly Audit & Risk and Search & Governance meetings and a single Remuneration Committee meeting in November '23.

Committees have clearly defined remits and delegated powers. The Instruments and Articles are being reviewed and will be taken to the July 2023 Board .

The Strategy Day is timed to provide strategic input to the Executive ahead of the development of the annual business plan. The annual Training Event is designed to help Governors understand the changing policy landscape in which they work, to support Ofsted preparation, provide updates on key issues such as EDI and Safeguarding and inform the board on the operation of the funding system. There are also regular presentations to the Board on priority issues and programmes. I was able to observe a session on STEM developments including the use of drone technology.

Link Governor arrangements are now back in operation following COVID. These cover both the statutory functions and links between governors and specific types of provision in the college such as English and Maths, Student Services, Quality, Finance, Environment and Sustainability, Learning Services/SEND, Employability and Higher Education. Apprenticeships is currently vacant.

The Clerk is highly experienced having worked at the college for many years. She currently works 2 days a week for the college and also acts as an NLG and undertakes External Board Reviews of other colleges. A senior manager has been appointed to replace her and handover arrangements are now in place.

The Board undertakes an analysis of its effectiveness on an annual basis, the results of which inform a Governance Quality Improvement Plan and Governor Development and Improvement Programme. The Quality Improvement Plan 2022/3 recommendations are to continue to develop board reporting and links to strategy, widen stakeholder engagement and address the new environmental sustainability section of the AoC Code of Good Governance.

Analysis and Findings

Governing documents and arrangements

A review of documentation, the survey, observation of meetings and discussion with governors, leads to a number of very positive conclusions about governing documents and arrangements:

- Arrangements are clear and well managed. Governors access Board and Committee papers online through VBR and are able to pose questions and receive executive responses ahead of the meeting. This is interesting practice, removing surprises at the Board table and streamlining board business, but arguably limiting wider board discussion. A case study of VBR use may be of value to the wider EBR process.
- The Governance Professional is very well organised, has the confidence of Governors and executive leaders and is effective in planning, liaising, minute taking and advising.

- The Board has welcomed the opportunity to return to face-to-face meetings since pandemic restrictions have been lifted. Only one governor needed to remotely join the May Corporation meeting.
- Committee and Board meetings were seen to be well chaired with open discussion, good questioning and robust challenge where necessary. The layout of the Board room has been designed to help engagement and inclusion.
- Meetings start with a presentation on a key topic which was widely welcomed.
- Student governors are invited to play a very active role at Board meetings and their opinions are valued.
- Board papers were described as well-structured and help the decision-making process. There are summaries to help governors focus on the main points for discussion, a clear "ask" of governors and helpful links to strategic priorities.
- The cycle of business has been adjusted to improve clarity about when sources of assurance will be available, and the depth of information provided.
- Good work has been done to strengthen the Risk Register, by including risk appetite and risk tolerance and removing duplication.
- The introduction of Risk Deep Dives had improved the level of assurance on risk mitigation. Deep dives into particular topics were seen to be a good way of gaining greater insight.
- There are high levels of transparency in sharing information and data with governors. Governors can access committee agendas, papers and minutes electronically. All Board and Committee minutes are available for public scrutiny once confirmed and signed. The College website offers good transparency on governance and is up to date.

The following issues were identified:

- Board packs are quite long as is the case in most colleges. It may be helpful create a shorter summary pack for those governors who do not wish to see the full range of supplementary material, for example the examples of Accountability statements in the March 23 pack.
- While Governors agree that data has improved over the last 12 months, there were some concerns about timeliness and some felt that the presentation of financial data has been slow to change, with a need to improve visualisation of information and trends. It is recommended that a Finance Scorecard is developed.
- KPIs were helpful and have developed, but some felt they could be more succinct and include the actions agreed to close the gaps.
- Several Board members felt there was scope to sharpen the focus of board meetings so that the Board focusses more time on the issues that matter most, with more high-level discussions on strategy, risk and business opportunities. Less time could be spent on reports and routine business. It was acknowledged that the Chair has been encouraging this.
- There was a specific concern that the college was "*not Ofsted ready*" in the sense that "*a clear portfolio of evidence has not been pulled together*". Given the SAR has 7 grade 3 and one grade 4 judgements, is the board sufficiently focussed on quality improvement? There is also a concern about HR and workforce issues.

- The college should consider developing a Balanced Scorecard to help the Board to track progress against their main strategic priorities.
- One Governor was concerned about the timeliness of response to internal audit issues. There was also a more general point about the need for greater clarity on deliverables and accountability for actions.
- Another was seeking to "*get beyond general reassurance*" in board discussions, to a place where sources of assurance were clear and evidenced. It may be helpful to use the new AoC Code of Good Governance as a starting place in identifying a matrix of sources of assurance.

Evaluation of structure and process

Self-evaluation is taken seriously. S&G checks compliance with the AoC Code of Good Governance for English Colleges on a regular basis and is paying close attention to the new duty to meet local skills needs. It was less clear how the Board will address new government requirements in relation to environmental sustainability.

There was a general view at interview that the Board and the college had handled Covid well with time devoted to keeping the college operating effectively on a day-to-day basis. The Board Development Plan has already reflected on the need to inject an increasing level of scrutiny, as stability returns, and it may be helpful more to reflect on the balance between operational and strategic discussion at Board. The development of a Balanced Scorecard and Board Assurance framework would help this analysis.

Conclusions

The overall conclusion is that governing documents and arrangements are well organised, follow clear rules and procedures that are regularly reviewed and support effective governance of the college. There is an issue of transparency in relation to financial information, but this is in the process of being resolved. The Board may benefit from use of more visual financial data, the development of a balanced scorecard to track progress against strategic objectives and a clearer move to assurance-based governance building on the draft 2023 AoC Code.

The Review has identified that **Board structure is a strength with some areas for development.**

Fig 6 : BOARD STRUCTURE

STRENGTH	AREA FOR DEVELOPMENT
1. Governing arrangements are clear and well managed by a well organised and highly experienced Governance Professional	1. 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.

2. Papers are detailed and have improved with helpful summaries and an opportunity to ask questions ahead of the Board meeting	2. Board discussions need to focus more sharply on strategic issues and the most important risks including quality concerns, readiness for Ofsted and workforce issues. Consider a Quality Working Group or Committee.
3. The Committees and Corporation are well chaired with open discussion and good questioning	3. The development of a strategic Balanced Scorecard and Finance Scorecard should be considered.
4.There is generally a high level of clarity and transparency in board papers with substantial detail	4. The development of a Board Assurance Framework would help governors to have confidence that they are gaining substantial internal and external assurance on all their main responsibilities.
5.There is regular evaluation of processes and structure, including against the AoC code.	5. Ensure responsiveness to internal audit issues
6. Risk management has been strengthened including Deep Dives and clearer risk appetite and tolerance	6.Actively support and develop the person taking on the GP role to ensure good governance arrangements are maintained

BOARD INTERACTION

Behaviours and interactions which allow for an inclusive culture that encourages effective challenge and impactful collaboration .

Behaviours and interactions contribute to Board culture. An effective Board culture encourages an effective blend of challenge and support to create impactful collaboration.

Analysis of Board interaction focuses on the following key underpinning question: *Does the Board's culture and interactions between Kendal Board members allow for the most effective deployment of individuals and collective skills to meet the College's goals?*

This is done through a review of how well the board work as a team, the quality of relationships between the board and with the executive and the extent to which the board takes collective responsibility for its decisions.

Background

The working relationship between Chair, CEO and Governance Professional, (often known as the triumvirate) is key to effective governance. Kendal College is fortunate in having a good level of stability at the most senior level with the Chair in the 7th year of his role, a long-standing Governance Professional and the Principal in post for 5 years.

Analysis and Findings

Culture, Relationships & Behaviours

There were many very positive indicators of a strong and effective culture:

- All Governors responding to the survey felt the Board worked well with the Principal, his staff and the Governance Professional. They all believed their opinion was welcomed and that there were good opportunities to scrutinise proposals and ask questions.
- The CEO, senior leaders and the GP are open and readily share information. There is no sense of defensiveness but an open welcoming of governor challenge as a means of improvement.
- Interviews reinforced the positive way in which the board works together and with the executive. Comments included:

"We are an open and productive board who will challenge where necessary".

"We have an excellent relationships with the college senior team and other staff and as Board we are supportive and challenging where required ".

"Excellent Board Chair and Committee Chairs".

"Feels like members of the board are able to contribute freely".

"The board is a very good team which ask tough questions and are very realistic when thinking strategically".

"A cohesive Board, long-term focussed with strong community and employer links".

"There are other good skills across Board members, and questions and discussions are insightful and supportive."

- The current culture of the Board as observed in meetings is friendly, disciplined and engaged. Meetings at the College are well chaired. Observation identified the Chair actively drawing in contributions, including from the student governors. All Governors showed confidence in making their voice heard.
- Interviews highlighted that the Board had become much more challenging under the current Chair, and this was welcomed. The Chair described the very positive change in culture under the current Principal from rather closed and challenging to an open, transparent and supportive approach without defensiveness, allowing a trust-based relationship to develop.
- There are very positive team building arrangements including the annual CPD day, good induction arrangements, access to online CPD modules which governors are encouraged to take up and mentoring arrangements for new governors by those who have more experience.
- It was interesting to hear that the Chair conducts "Meet the Chair" sessions with staff. This was seen as positive practice and a demonstration of the level of trust in the senior relationships.

- The Board makes strategic decisions collectively. There is appropriate separation between management and the Board. Although Governors focus on different areas and have different specialisms there was clear evidence of collective responsibility.

The following issues were identified:

- S&G called for new impetus on governor training given that the contract for existing online modules has come to an end. The GP is waiting for the new package to be announced.
- Only 55% of those surveyed felt that governors operated strategically, with operations delegated to the executive. Some comments in the survey reinforced this concern including:

"Occasionally the board has a slight tendency to drop into operational matters, but this doesn't always happen".

"Strategic change is slower than I would like".

"Last year when we were trying to develop the new strategic plan, it felt like the ask from the board was initially quite confused… We were able to work through this and come up with a good strategy".

"Sometimes meetings get lost in the detail - questions in advance now improve this".

- Newer governors would welcome more time to get to know the other governors to help strengthen the bond as a board.
- The chair would like Governors to give more time to engaging in the wider life of the college beyond the formal meeting structure, including supporting external links to stakeholders. Governors with full time work or other responsibilities may struggle to fit additional college activity into their schedules. It may help to be more explicit at interview stage about the time commitment required of governors beyond the formal meeting schedule.

Conclusions

The Review has identified that **Board Interaction is a strength with two specific areas for development.**

Two comments summed up the overall position:

"The board is a great team with a huge array of different knowledge and areas of expertise, this forms tightly as a group who share the same goals the best interest of the college, students, staff and community".

"We have a great Board, pushing the Exec team, The College has a great reputation, and we hold on to that as custodians should – it is easy to lose".

The following table at Fig 7. provides a summary:

Fig 7 : BOARD INTERACTION

STRENGTH	AREA FOR DEVELOPMENT
1. The triumvirate of Chair, CEO and Clerk have established a very effective relationship	1. There is an opportunity for the Board to operate more strategically. This would be welcomed by governors.
2. Meetings of the Board and Committees are well chaired. Governors feel comfortable in raising issues.	2. Encouraging governors to engage more actively in the life of the college beyond the formal meeting schedule and making these asks more explicit at interview.
3. There is a culture of openness challenge, trust and support. The Executive value the contribution governors make and are not defensive when questions are raised.	
4. There has been a very positive change in culture under the current Principal and Chair	
5. There is strong evidence of collective responsibility	
6. Team building is actively supported	

Overall Board Effectiveness

The core functions of a Governing Body are:

• setting and communicating the College educational character, strategy and goals

• holding executive leaders to account for educational performance and quality of the college and performance of staff

• exercising effective control to ensure that funds and assets are protected, and legal obligations are met.

Each of these is being delivered by the Board at Kendal College. Clear arrangements are in place to exercise effective control of funds and assets including a finance and resources working group that maintains close attention to revenue and capital spend and an Audit and Risk Committee that has developed strong risk management procedures and close attention to audit outcomes.

Educational performance is tracked though KPI reporting, quality reports and involvement in the SAR process. Given the challenges highlighted in the current SAR and the likelihood of an Ofsted inspection in the near future, the Board should review whether it is giving quality

improvement and Ofsted preparation sufficient attention and whether board expertise needs to be strengthened in this area. The Chair currently leads personally on educational performance and quality due to his expertise in training and development. Is it right that he carries this alone, especially as he is nearing the end of his second term as a governor?

Setting and reviewing educational character, strategy and goals takes place at an annual strategic event and a new Strategic Plan, "Kendal Ambition" has recently been published for 2022-25 that reflects local skills priorities. Board members welcome the clearer link from each board paper to the strategic priorities they have set but would welcome less time spent on standard reporting and more focussed debate on strategy and priorities.

Board Impact

Looking at the 9 Board outcomes set out at Fig. 8, there is good and consistent achievement against all areas. The overall conclusion is that there is **strong evidence that the Board is proficient and consistently impacts positively on college effectiveness, and outcomes**.

Fig. 8: Board Outcomes: Summary

Board Outcome	Evidence
Student experience : student voice is valued and student experience and safeguarding are central to decision making	Student Governors explicitly invited to offer a view by the Chair. In process of identifying new lead governor for Safeguarding and made a priority for governor recruitment.
Integrity: commitment to Nolan principles and the AoC Code	All governors felt the Nolan Principals were being observed. Adherence to AoC Code regularly reviewed.
Quality: progress and achievement of students effectively monitored and scrutinised	No Quality and Standards Committee, but the Chair personally leads on this and detailed reports on key metrics relating to quality and progress go to the Corporation Board.
Financial soundness: robust financial system and processes	Strong Finance Working Group and Audit and Risk Committee. Audit reports demonstrate sound financial systems.
Reflectiveness: Board and individual performance and impact are thoroughly reviewed	Board performance reviewed annually, and the Chair holds individual discussions with Governors. Annual Governance Improvement Plan.
Responsiveness: Board engages and has positive partnerships within the local community.	The relationship with the hospitality sector was particularly noted, Simon Rogan Academy. Seeking to build stronger links with other sectors.
Collective Accountability: responsibility for strategy and decisions and compliant with regulations	Strong on compliance and on accountability for operational performance including financial sustainability, quality and curriculum.

Inclusivity and diversity: equality, diversity and inclusion are central to decision making and impact is measured	A well-balanced board in terms of expertise and experience and gender balance improving but other aspects of EDI continue to need work.
Strategic leadership: setting a clear direction and objectives for the organisation.	Board involvement through the Strategic event and in writing the Strategic Plan. Sound basic strategy with positive growth over a 20-year period with recent big estates/capital decisions, but strategic focus on quality and other key issues is an area for development.

Recommendations

This Review has highlighted a wide range of strengths in relation to all aspects of college governance as set out in the report above. A small number of areas of development have emerged from survey comments, discussions with governors and from observation of Corporation and Committee meetings. These are:

Board Composition is a strength but with areas for development:

1. Clarify the succession plan for Chairing the Corporation.
2. Identify and urgently fill the Safeguarding link governor role on a more permanent basis.
3. Identify who will be in a position to lead on quality and curriculum issues when the Chair steps down and ensure adequate governor capacity on quality issues.
4. Continue to review equality, diversity and inclusion to ensure diversity of thought and perspective is brought to the Board table.

Board structure is a strength with areas for development:

1. 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.
2. Board discussions need to focus more sharply on strategic issues and the most important risks including quality and workforce concerns and readiness for Ofsted. Consider a Quality Working Group or Committee.
3. The development of a strategic Balanced Scorecard and Finance Scorecard should be considered.
4. The development of a Board Assurance Framework would help governors to have confidence that they are gaining substantial internal and external assurance on all their main responsibilities.
5. Ensure responsiveness to internal audit issues
6.Actively support and develop the person taking on the GP role to ensure good governance arrangements are maintained

Board Interaction is a strength with two specific areas for development:

1. There is an opportunity for the Board to operate more strategically. This would be welcomed by governors.
2. Encouraging governors to engage more actively in the life of the college beyond the formal meeting schedule and making these asks more explicit at interview.

The overall assessment is that this is a college with very good governance arrangements, making some big decisions on estates development in the face of challenging financial and workforce issues. **There is strong evidence that the Board is effective and consistently impacts positively on college effectiveness and outcomes**.

Annex A: Timetable for External Board Review at Kendal College

Activity	Proposed action & timescale	Estimate of time
Phase 1: Set up meeting /introductory session – meeting with Chair, GP and Principal/CEO	Remote meeting – to be held 29.03.23. Meeting to confirm plan and agree dates	None
Phase 2 : Desktop review - survey	Tailored survey distributed by AoC to the Governors Start date End date Survey report issued to Simon	None
Phase 3: Desktop review – document review	College to send the following documents or make available online: • Agendas and supporting papers for Board and its Committees (Audit, Governance & Search Committee) for the 2 most recent cycles (Board minutes to be accesses where available via college website) • Key corporate documents e.g. strategic plan and risk register • Governance and college SAR/QIP • Any recent audit reports that touch on governance • Governor skills audit documentation • Sample Governor induction material and process including any appraisal/developmental processes • Length of service of Governors and any guidance on terms of office • Instrument and articles (2020 version on website) • Schedule of compliance with AoC Code • Relevant policies • Any other documentation you think will be relevant.	2 days
Phase 4 Interviews: It is suggested that these be arranged as part of a visit to the college to attend a Board meeting	1-1 discussions with Governors: CEO: Chair Vice Chair: GP: Audit and other committee chairs: A link Governor and any other Governors who would wish to meet me.	2 Days
Phase 5 Board/Committee observation:	To observe: Board meeting: in person Audit Committee: online, Standards/quality online F and R : online	1 Day
Phase 6 Reporting (draft)	Report writing Discussion of initial findings with CEO, Clerk and Chair	3 Days
Phase 7 Final report post moderation shared	Feedback session -presentation of findings to the Board if required.	
Add on Phase 8	Delivery to the Board in person by Simon	1 Day
Add on Phase 9 Follow up if required. Would recommend given appointment of new Chair	After 6 months to review progress April 2024 approx. TBC	1 day Total = 10 days + .5 for moderation