ITCHEN SIXTH FORM COLLEGE

Annual Accountability Agreement

2026 - 2027

For Full Board Approval

Ofsted Outstanding Provider

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College Mission and Purpose

Our Mission is to be an inclusive and dynamic College offering excellence in learning, where all students flourish.

We deliver this mission through our Strategic Priorities, which set out our ambitions for learners, staff, and the communities we serve, and which guide decision-making at all levels of the organisation.

We expect our learners to develop confidence and resilience, to succeed in their chosen programme of study, and to progress to destinations that build on their abilities and aspirations. We achieve this by prioritising:

- **Excellence in Learning** – The College maintains an outstanding reputation for the quality and breadth of its provision. We continue to develop teaching, learning and assessment through creativity and innovation, ensuring that learners benefit from high-quality resources and opportunities that prepare them effectively for further study and employment.
- **Outstanding Outcomes** – The College retains its strong reputation as an inclusive institution, recognised for both academic excellence and high-quality pastoral support. We are committed to delivering clear and ambitious pathways to success for all learners, regardless of prior attainment or starting point.
- **Growth** – We invest in the growth of our learners and staff through a broad enrichment offer, professional development, and strong partnerships with employers, higher education institutions, and feeder schools. We continue to expand and adapt provision to meet the needs of our local community and to reduce reliance on short-term or agency funding.
- **Sustainability** – The College is committed to long-term financial and environmental sustainability. We manage resources responsibly to support high-quality provision, maintain and develop our estate, and respond effectively to demographic growth and curriculum change, while acting sensitively towards our environment and local community.

College Mission and Purpose

- Our Mission and Strategic Priorities are set out in the College's Strategic Plan and are reviewed annually by the governing body. Delivery is supported through Self Assessment Review and Quality Improvement Plan, with clear Key Performance Indicators and summary targets. Progress against these targets is monitored by SLT and relevant committees and reported to the Full Board, ensuring robust oversight and accountability.

- The current Strategic Plan (2021–2026) concludes at the end of this academic year. During 2026/27, the Principal and governing body are overseeing the transition to a new strategic planning cycle, informed by reflection on current situation, performance, learner outcomes, inspection findings, and emerging local, regional and national priorities. This includes maintaining momentum in areas of strength while identifying and addressing new and evolving challenges.

- The College has a statutory duty under the Skills and Post-16 Education Act to contribute to meeting local, regional and national skills needs. This Annual Accountability Statement sets out how the College fulfils this duty in practice. It reflects engagement with the Local Skills Improvement Plan developed by the Hampshire Chamber of Commerce in collaboration with employers, local authorities, and other providers, alongside national skills priorities set out by the Department for Education.

- Following the College's Ofsted inspection in October 2024, which confirmed an Outstanding overall effectiveness judgement and a judgement of Reasonable for meeting skills needs, the College has continued to strengthen its curriculum, employer engagement and progression pathways. Actions taken since inspection focus on sustaining high-quality provision while improving responsiveness to local labour market needs.

- Curriculum reviews undertaken in recent years have led to the successful implementation of additional T Levels, the reintroduction of A Level subjects previously unavailable locally, and the strengthening of Entry Level and Level 1 pathways. These developments ensure that learners can access appropriate provision within the city, with clear progression routes to further study, apprenticeships and employment.

Strategic Planning Cycle

This Annual Accountability Statement complements the College's Strategic Plan by explaining how statutory duties relating to skills are met through curriculum design, partnership working and learner outcomes. Review and development of the statement are embedded within the governing body's annual strategic cycle, aligning accountability, performance review and forward planning.



Context and Place

Itchen Sixth Form College and the Southampton Area

Why the College operates as it does.

Itchen Sixth Form College is a major post-16 provider located in the eastern part of Southampton, serving a city with persistent socioeconomic challenges alongside a diverse and growing population. In 2025/26, the College enrolled over 1,850 full-time learners aged 16–19 and delivers a significant and expanding adult and community learning offer, which now accounts for more than 10% of total income. Alongside its core 16–18 academic offer, the College also delivers adult, ESOL and targeted re-engagement provision. Together, this reflects the needs of the local population and the College's strategic role within the city's education and skills system.

Approximately half of the College's 16–18 learners are drawn from Southampton, with the remainder travelling from neighbouring areas of Hampshire including Eastleigh, Locks Heath and Fareham. The adult provision serves learners across the wider Hampshire and Solent area. This mixed catchment requires the College to balance city-specific priorities with regional labour market needs when planning curriculum, partnerships and resource allocation.

Southampton continues to experience significant deprivation and inequality. A substantial proportion of the city's population live in neighbourhoods ranked among the most deprived nationally, with child poverty remaining above national averages. In parts of the Itchen constituency, around 30% of children live in poverty, compared with a national average closer to one in six. These factors continue to affect educational engagement, attainment and progression for many young people.

Prior attainment on entry to post-16 education in the city remains below national and regional benchmarks. Around a third of learners arrive at the College without GCSE English and/or mathematics, significantly above national averages for sixth form colleges. Outcomes at age 16 across Southampton remain comparatively low, particularly in English and mathematics, which has implications for progression, confidence and study readiness. These factors directly shape the College's emphasis on inclusive curriculum pathways, strong pastoral support, and sustained focus on English, mathematics and study skills development.

Context and Place

Southampton is also characterised by historically low participation in higher education, with several local neighbourhoods identified as national cold spots for progression. Learners who remain in the city for post-16 study are more likely to come from economically disadvantaged households, to combine study with part-time employment, and to have caring or financial responsibilities. These pressures increase the risk of disengagement and early exit from education, reinforcing the importance of clear progression pathways and flexible, supportive provision.

The College reflects the increasing ethnic and linguistic diversity of the city and has strengthened its approach to inclusion and engagement in response. Over the last three years the college has introduced new T level courses and has increased A level provision to ensure a strong curriculum offer is available to support ambitious and aspirational learners within the city. In 2026/27, the College introduced dedicated 16–18 ESOL pathways to support young people for whom English is an additional language. Alongside this, the introduction of the King's Trust Team Programme in 2025/26 provides an intensive route back into learning or work for young people who are not in education, employment or training. These developments complement existing Entry Level and Level 1 provision and the College's wider adult provision, forming part of a coordinated approach to reducing disengagement and supporting progression.

Despite these challenges, the College has a strong track record of improving outcomes for learners from disadvantaged backgrounds. Achievement and progression data show that learners make strong progress from their starting points, with high levels of positive destinations into further education, higher education, apprenticeships and employment. Participation in higher education among learners from low-participation and lower-income backgrounds remains significantly above national averages, providing clear evidence of the College's impact on aspiration and social mobility.

Taken together, the demographic, economic and educational characteristics of Southampton shape the College's strategic priorities, curriculum design and partnership activity. The breadth of provision offered by the College, spanning Entry Level to Level 3 alongside adult and targeted re-engagement programmes, represents a deliberate and governed response to local need. This Annual Accountability Statement sets out how the College continues to use public funding responsibly to support learners, employers and communities within this complex and evolving context.

Community Engagement and Support

Community engagement is a core delivery mechanism through which the College meets its strategic priorities and statutory responsibilities. The College works with a range of partners to ensure that curriculum delivery, learner support and progression pathways are responsive to identified local need and aligned with wider skills and employment priorities.

The College maintains established partnerships with Southampton City Council, Hampshire County Council, the Department for Work and Pensions and contracted employment support providers. These partnerships enable the delivery of targeted programmes focused on employability, re-engagement and progression, including sector-based work programmes, pre-employment training and funded initiatives aligned to local labour market demand.

Employer and HE engagement informs curriculum design and learner experience across vocational and academic provision. Employer groups contribute to programme development in areas such as Health and Social Care, Early Years and Uniformed Services, while strategic employer partnerships provide opportunities for work experience, industry insight and progression. All 16–18 learners are supported to access meaningful work experience or work placement activity together with HE advice and guidance as part of their study programme.

The College also works collaboratively with other education providers and local partners including universities, further education colleges and schools to support a coherent post-16 system across the city and to meet the needs of learners requiring additional intervention. This includes delivery of Entry Level and Level 1 pathways, the King's Trust Team Programme for young people with complex barriers, and adult provision delivered in partnership with local authorities and funding bodies. Through these arrangements, the College maximises the impact of public funding, supports progression beyond the classroom and embeds community engagement within core provision.

Contribution to Local, Regional and National Priorities

The College contributes to local, regional and national priorities primarily through its role as a sixth form college offering a broad and high-quality Level 3 curriculum. A wide range of A Level, vocational and technical programmes supports progression into higher education, apprenticeships and skilled employment, while ensuring that learners are able to study at an appropriate level within the city.

In fulfilling its duty under the Skills and Post-16 Education Act, the College aligns curriculum planning and review with the Local Skills Improvement Plan for the Solent area, developed through employer-led consultation. LSIP priorities, alongside labour market intelligence and local authority strategies, inform decisions on curriculum development, subject offer and capacity. This ensures that academic and technical provision remains relevant, responsive and aligned to future skills needs.

At a local level, the College supports priorities relating to participation, aspiration and social mobility through strong progression outcomes at Level 3. Academic, vocational and technical pathways enable learners to progress into higher education, including to selective and high-tariff institutions, as well as into apprenticeships and skilled employment. The College's emphasis on enrichment, employability and work-related learning complements academic study and supports informed progression choices.

Alongside its core academic offer, the College provides targeted pathways at Entry Level, Level 1 and Level 2 for learners who require additional support to access post-16 education. These pathways are designed as transitional routes, enabling progression into Level 3 study, apprenticeships or employment, and play a supporting role in the wider mission of improving participation and reducing disengagement across the city. The introduction of 16–18 ESOL pathways further strengthens access for learners for whom language is a barrier to participation. This supports local and national priorities in ensuring 16-24 year olds remain in education, employment and training.

Contribution to Local, Regional and National Priorities

Employer engagement underpins curriculum relevance across both academic and vocational provision. Employer input informs curriculum content, enrichment activity and work experience opportunities, particularly in priority sectors such as Health and Social Care, Early Years, Digital and Technology, Engineering-related pathways and areas aligned to the local economy including travel and tourism. This approach supports the development of transferable skills alongside subject knowledge.

The College's adult provision contributes to regional and national priorities by supporting workforce participation, retraining and upskilling. Delivered in partnership with local authorities and funding bodies, this provision complements the 16–18 curriculum and strengthens progression pathways across age groups.

Nationally, the College supports priorities around participation, essential skills and progression. Strong outcomes in English and mathematics, high levels of positive destinations and sustained progression into higher education, apprenticeships and employment demonstrate effective use of public funding and a clear contribution to social mobility.

Through this balanced academic and inclusive model, the College makes a clear and accountable contribution to meeting local, regional and national priorities. This contribution is reviewed annually by the governing body to ensure continued alignment with skills needs, learner outcomes and public value.

Alignment with Local Skills Improvement Plan Priorities

In fulfilling its duty under the Skills and Post-16 Education Act, the College aligns curriculum planning, employer engagement and progression activity with the employer-led priorities set out in the Solent Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP). The Solent LSIP emphasises:

- raising awareness and aspiration for priority sectors and progression routes;
- improving navigation of the skills system for learners and employers;
- strengthening proactive employer engagement;
- ensuring provision is agile and responsive to changing skills needs;
- developing clear pathways into further learning, employment and training; and
- supporting the transition between current and future skills demand.

The College's curriculum offer, enrichment activity, work experience programme, targeted pathways and adult provision are reviewed annually against these priorities. This ensures that provision remains employer-informed, supports progression at all levels, and contributes effectively to local and regional economic needs while maintaining the College's core academic sixth form identity.

Objectives and Outcomes 26/27

The objectives set out below describe how the College will deliver its Strategic Plan during 2026/27 and how progress will be monitored and evaluated. They reflect the College's role as an academic sixth form college with a broad and inclusive offer and align with the governing body's oversight of quality, performance, skills alignment and financial sustainability.
Progress against these objectives is monitored through the College's Operational Plan, Key Performance Indicators and committee reporting cycle, with assurance provided to the Full Board.

Objective 1: Deliver high-quality academic and technical provision that supports strong progression outcomes (Strategic Priority: Excellence in Learning / Outstanding Outcomes)

Purpose
To maintain the College's position as a high-performing academic sixth form college, offering a broad Level 3 curriculum that supports progression into higher education, apprenticeships and skilled employment.

Outcomes achieved to date

- Sustained breadth and quality of A Level, vocational and technical provision
- High levels of positive destinations into further education, higher education, apprenticeships and employment
- Strong progression outcomes for learners from disadvantaged backgrounds

Focus for 2026/27

- Sustain curriculum quality following the Outstanding Ofsted judgement
- Strengthen progression to selective and high-tariff higher education and higher-level apprenticeships
- Ensure curriculum review remains aligned with local and national skills priorities without compromising academic breadth

Objectives and Outcomes 26/27

Objective 2: Support inclusive access and progression for learners with diverse starting points (Strategic Priority: Outstanding Outcomes / Growth)

Purpose

To ensure that learners with a wide range of prior attainment and personal circumstances are supported to access post-16 education and progress successfully.

Outcomes achieved to date

- Clear Entry Level, Level 1 and Level 2 pathways supporting transition into further study or employment
- Strong retention and progression from lower-level provision
- Targeted support for learners at risk of disengagement

Focus for 2026/27

- Strengthen progression routes from lower-level pathways into Level 3 study, apprenticeships or employment
- Embed newly introduced 16–18 ESOL provision with clear progression expectations
- Maintain a strong balance between inclusivity and academic ambition

Objectives and Outcomes 26/27

Objective 3: Embed employability, enrichment and work-related learning across study programmes (Strategic Priority: Excellence in Learning / Growth)

Purpose

To complement academic and vocational study with enrichment, employability skills and real-world experience that support confident progression.

Outcomes achieved to date

- Significant expansion of enrichment participation across the student body
- All 16–18 learners supported to access meaningful work experience or placement activity
- Positive learner and employer feedback on employability readiness

Focus for 2026/27

- Further embed enrichment as a core component of study programmes
- Strengthen the link between enrichment, employability and progression outcomes
- Maintain strong employer engagement to support curriculum relevance

Objectives and Outcomes 26/27

Objective 4: Contribute effectively to local and regional skills needs through partnership working (Strategic Priority: Growth)

Purpose

To ensure the College's curriculum and delivery model respond to employer-led skills priorities and contribute to local and regional economic needs.

Outcomes achieved to date

- Curriculum planning informed by the Solent Local Skills Improvement Plan
- Strong employer partnerships shaping vocational and technical provision
- Delivery of targeted programmes supporting employability and workforce participation

Focus for 2026/27

- Continue aligning curriculum review with LSIP priorities
- Strengthen employer input into curriculum development and work experience
- Ensure skills alignment complements and enhances academic progression rather than constraining curriculum breadth

Objectives and Outcomes 26/27

Objective 5: Maintain financial sustainability and effective governance oversight (Strategic Priority: Sustainability)

Purpose

To ensure responsible stewardship of public funding and long-term sustainability while supporting high-quality provision.

Outcomes achieved to date

- Stable financial position with clear oversight of income, expenditure and risk
- Effective governance arrangements supporting challenge and assurance
- Clear alignment between strategy, operational planning and accountability reporting

Focus for 2026/27

- Support transition to the next Strategic Plan
- Maintain value for money while responding to demographic and curriculum pressures
- Ensure governance continues to provide robust oversight of quality, finance and skills alignment

Value for Money and Public Benefit

- The College is committed to ensuring that public funding is used effectively to deliver high-quality education, strong learner outcomes and wider public benefit. Value for money is demonstrated through sustained progression and destination outcomes, particularly in the context of learners' starting points, and through the breadth of provision offered without unnecessary duplication across the local post-16 system.

- Curriculum planning is informed by demand, progression data and local skills priorities, enabling the College to maintain a strong academic offer alongside inclusive and targeted pathways where required. Investment in teaching, learning, enrichment and learner support is aligned with strategic priorities and subject to regular review to ensure impact.

- Financial sustainability is monitored closely by senior leaders and governors, with clear oversight of income, expenditure and risk. This enables the College to balance curriculum breadth, inclusion and quality with long-term viability, ensuring that public funding supports both current learners and future provision.

Looking Ahead:
Key Challenges and Priorities

- The College enters 2026/27 from a position of strength, but within a challenging and evolving external environment. Key pressures include demographic change, funding constraints, workforce capacity and the need to sustain curriculum breadth while responding to local and national skills priorities.

- During 2026/27, the College will focus on sustaining high-quality academic provision and strong progression outcomes while transitioning to the next strategic planning cycle. Priorities include maintaining curriculum relevance, supporting staff capacity and wellbeing, and ensuring that inclusive pathways continue to enable progression without diluting academic ambition.

- The College will continue to review provision, partnerships and resource allocation in response to emerging risks and opportunities, ensuring that decisions remain evidence-based and aligned with strategic priorities and statutory duties.

Governance Assurance

This Annual Accountability Statement has been reviewed and approved by the governing body. Governors have considered how the College's provision aligns with its Strategic Plan, the Skills and Post-16 Education Act, and the Solent Local Skills Improvement Plan, and have assured themselves that appropriate systems are in place to monitor delivery and impact.

Progress against the objectives set out in this statement will be monitored through the College's committee structure, operational planning processes and performance reporting cycle, with regular review by the Full Board. The governing body will use this statement as part of its ongoing oversight of quality, financial sustainability and public accountability.

Local Needs Duty

The governing body undertakes an annual review of the College's provision in the context of the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP). This review draws on a range of evidence, including post-16 destinations data, recruitment and participation patterns, labour market intelligence, proposed curriculum changes, and the provision offered by partner and neighbouring providers.

Through this process, governors have confirmed that the College continues to make a significant contribution to meeting local skills and participation needs. Strategic decisions to extend and adapt 16–18 provision have been taken to increase choice within the city, reduce the need for learners to travel elsewhere to access appropriate qualifications, and support progression into higher education, apprenticeships and skilled employment. Curriculum planning remains responsive, with further refinements made as part of the annual review cycle to reflect emerging demand and employer-led priorities.

This Annual Accountability Statement forms part of the College's ongoing strategic dialogue with the Department for Education and provides assurance of how the Local Needs Duty is being met in practice. It is supported by the FE provider dashboard and other performance and outcomes data reviewed regularly by the governing body.

Corporation Statement

On behalf of the governing body, it is hereby confirmed that this Annual Accountability Statement reflects the agreed purpose, aims and objectives of the College and has been approved by the Full Board.

The governing body has reviewed the content of this statement in the context of its statutory duties, including the requirement to contribute to meeting local, regional and national skills needs, and is satisfied that it provides an accurate and appropriate account of the College's activity and priorities.

This statement will be published on the College's website within one month of the approval date and will be accessible via the following link: *Annual Accountability Statement.*

Chair of Governors: Mr Beverley Jones

Principal and Chief Executive Officer: Mrs Rebecca Stratton

Date of approval: _____

Appendix: Supporting Documents and Evidence Base

Document	Purpose and relevance to the Annual Accountability Statement
Solent Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) – August 2023	Sets out the employer-led priorities for skills development across the Solent area. Used by the College to inform curriculum planning, employer engagement and progression pathways in fulfilment of the Skills and Post-16 Education Act duty. Link
Solent LSIP Progress Report 2024	Provides an update on delivery of LSIP priorities, employer engagement activity and system development. Supports assurance that curriculum decisions remain aligned with evolving employer needs. Link
Solent LSIP Progress Report 2025	Most recent assessment of progress against LSIP priorities, including emerging focus areas and future direction. Used to inform curriculum review and strategic planning for 2026/27. Link
Hampshire Chamber of Commerce – LSIP Overview and Priorities	Provides contextual information on the role of the Employer Representative Body and the rationale behind Solent LSIP priorities. Supports transparency in how the College engages with the LSIP process. Link
Gov.uk: Local Skills Improvement Plans – Designated Employer Representative Bodies	National guidance confirming the statutory purpose of LSIPs and the designated employer representative bodies. Demonstrates compliance with national expectations. Link

Appendix: Supporting Documents and Evidence Base

Document	Purpose and relevance to the Annual Accountability Statement
Gov.uk: Guidance for Developing a Local Skills Improvement Plan	National guidance outlining how LSIPs are developed and reviewed. Provides context for how employer-led priorities inform provider planning. Link
Hampshire Skills Strategy 2025	Regional skills strategy providing wider context on workforce needs, economic priorities and partnership working across Hampshire. Complements LSIP priorities. Link
College Strategic Plan (2021–2026) and emerging strategic priorities	Sets out the College's mission, strategic priorities and governance framework. Provides overarching context for accountability and skills alignment.
Ofsted Inspection Report (October 2024)	Independent evaluation of quality of education, leadership and management, and skills provision. Informs governance oversight and quality improvement. Link
College Self-Assessment Report (SAR) and Quality Improvement Plan (QIP)	Internal evaluation and improvement planning documents ensuring consistency between accountability reporting, quality assurance and delivery.
College Financial Statements	Provide assurance on financial sustainability, value for money and stewardship of public funds. Link

ITCHEN SIXTH FORM COLLEGE

WITH US, IT'S FROM WHO YOU ARE TO ALL YOU CAN BE.