

Riverside College



STRATEGIC PLAN 2021-2022



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Chapter 1 | Vision, Values and Strategic Aims

Our Vision

Through the excellence of the education we provide, we will enhance and transform lives.

We strive to be sector-leading in everything we do.

Our Values

1. Teaching and learning is our priority and the needs and safety of our students always come first.
2. As members of the College we are partners in the success of the organisation and we are all accountable for our outcomes.
3. High standards are at the heart of all that we do. In our pursuit of excellence, we recognise that individually and collectively we can always improve.
4. Within our college community we treat each other with respect, trust, openness, care and consideration. We celebrate student and staff success.
5. We are an inclusive college where we promote and protect equality and diversity.
6. We work in partnership with employers and other stakeholders so that we can make a positive contribution to local, regional and national economic development.



Our Strategic Aims

1. To achieve high **quality** outcomes for our students by prioritising teaching, learning and progression.
2. To continue to improve levels of **efficiency** and remain in outstanding financial health.
3. To maximise opportunities for **growth**.

In the context of emerging into a post-COVID society, the introduction of the Skills and Post-16 Education Bill (May 2021) and the pressing needs to address climate change.

Strategic Aims

- 1 To achieve high **quality** outcomes for our students by prioritising teaching, learning and progression.

We will do this by:

- 1.1 Prioritising the delivery of outstanding **quality** in terms of teaching, learning and assessment and the student experience so that all our students progress and reach their potential.
- 1.2 Striving to create a college community with core values at its heart.
- 1.3 Nurturing our students and staff so that we have high levels of morale and wellbeing, together with creativity, innovation and excellence.
- 1.4 Providing exceptional levels of student care with an emphasis on good citizenship, employability skills and positive progression outcomes.
- 1.5 Investing in our staff to sustain high quality provision through outstanding staff development activities.
- 1.6 Developing leadership and management skills at all levels within the organisation through the Leadership Development Programme.
- 1.7 Implementing a recovery programme to identify gaps in knowledge and skills due to the pandemic and building on the digital skills learnt in lockdown.

- 2 To continue to improve levels of **efficiency** and remain in outstanding financial health.

We will do this by:

- 2.1 Maintaining financial stability through effective cost control and creating funds to grow.
- 2.2 Investing in and modernising our centres to meet local and regional priorities and addressing the needs of green technology and the low carbon economy.

- 3 To maximise opportunities for **growth**.

We will do this by:

- 3.1 Promoting growth areas, particularly 16-18, Higher Education, apprenticeships, full cost recovery courses and the new opportunities for adults.
- 3.2 Prioritising the needs of the people of Halton and the Liverpool City Region (LCR).
- 3.3 Continuing to be the first choice for school leavers, adult learners and employers while maintaining a market-led, regionally responsive college with an exciting and engaging curriculum.
- 3.4 Working in partnership to engage those who traditionally do not participate in education and training.

- 3.5 Working with employers and Employer Representative Bodies (ERBs) to develop a responsive curriculum to close the skills gap and provide a highly skilled local workforce.



2.1 External and Internal Assessment

2.1.1 In March 2020, the College was judged by Ofsted to be outstanding.

The inspection report highlights many positive aspects for the College including:

- *‘Learners and apprentices are **exceptionally well motivated** and demonstrate **extremely positive attitudes to learning**’*
- *‘Relationships between learners, apprentices and their teachers and assessors are **excellent**’*
- *‘Learners and apprentices develop their confidence, resilience and strong independence skills’*
- *‘Senior leaders and governors are **very ambitious** for their learners and apprentices’*
- *‘Senior leaders and governors promote **especially high standards** in all aspects of the college’*
- *‘Governors have **high aspirations** for their learners, apprentices and staff’*
- *‘Learners and apprentices enjoy a wide range of courses that **meet local and regional needs exceptionally well**’*
- *‘Leaders have **exceptional links** with local employers and regional business groups’*
- *‘Assessors, in conjunction with employers, ensure that apprentices benefit from **excellent and well planned on- and off-the job training**’*
- *‘Learners on advanced level programmes **greatly benefit** from the ‘prestigious universities’ programme that facilitates successful applications to universities. Consequently, **most progress into higher education with a significant number going to the best universities**’*
- *‘Learners experience a **wide range** of work experience opportunities and, as a result, they develop higher-level interpersonal skills’*
- *‘Managers, teachers and staff provide learners and apprentices with **excellent** and impartial careers information, advice and guidance before and during their programmes’*

Link to inspection report: <https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/31/130622>.

2.1.2 The new Education Inspection Framework (EIF) started in September 2019. Previously, under this framework, outstanding providers would not normally be inspected unless performance declines, however, in 2021 this changed. Outstanding providers are now subject to the standard 5 year cycle

2.1.3 Alongside Ofsted the College receives a number of external assessments throughout the year including: Department for Education (DfE) performance tables; Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF); Quality Monitoring Reviews (QMRs); Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) audit; FE Choices; learner and employer surveys; MATRIX Award and the Higher Education Annual Provider Review all of which acknowledge excellent performance and high levels of satisfaction.

2.1.4 In Autumn 2020 the College produced a Self-Assessment Report (SAR) for 2019/2020, with the following grades:

Overall judgements (* denotes changes in Ofsted framework)	SAR Grade 2017/2018	SAR Grade 2018/2019	SAR Grade 2019/2020
Overall effectiveness	Grade 1: Outstanding	Grade 1: Outstanding	Grade 1: Outstanding
Leadership and management	Grade 1: Outstanding	Grade 1: Outstanding	Grade 1: Outstanding
Quality of Education *	Grade 1: Outstanding	Grade 1: Outstanding	Grade 1: Outstanding
Personal development*	Grade 1: Outstanding	Grade 1: Outstanding	Grade 1: Outstanding
Behaviour and Attitudes *	Grade 1: Outstanding	Grade 1: Outstanding	Grade 1: Outstanding



2.1.5 The following key strengths were identified:

1. Judgements from external agencies evidence that the College is outstanding. This includes Ofsted: Grade 1; Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF): Gold and ESFA financial rating: Outstanding
2. Health and the wellbeing of staff and students are of the highest importance. A culture of self-improvement and continuous improvement permeates the College. (Ofsted 2020)

3. Students make excellent progress whilst at College. Achievement rates continue to be outstanding for almost all learners
4. Learners and apprentices enjoy an extremely well-planned curriculum, which means they gain significant new knowledge and skills quickly. They gain the attitudes and behaviours they need to progress to higher levels of study or work. Teachers and trainers are well qualified and benefit from high-quality professional development that develops their subject knowledge and expertise. (Ofsted 2020)
5. Outstanding financial management has led to economic stability and effective deployment of resources and investment in facilities.
6. Leaders, managers and teachers have developed a high-quality curriculum that widens learners' and apprentices' experiences and life skills. (Ofsted 2020)
7. Arrangements for safeguarding are highly effective.
8. Leaders have exceptional links with local employers and regional business groups, including the local enterprise partnership and regional mayoral authorities. (Ofsted 2020)

2.1.6 The Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) identified the key areas for improvement:

1. Improve the quality of education for learners in the foundation studies department to ensure the more confident learners make rapid progress. (Ofsted 2020)
2. Improve the quality of education for students on adult basic skills programmes. (Ofsted 2020)
3. Improve the quality of education for the very few courses and apprenticeship courses that are not yet outstanding.

2.1.7 The College aims to address these areas for improvement in addition to those parts of the College which are not yet rated as outstanding. These are detailed in the Quality, Efficiency, Growth (QEG) Plan which acts as the College's 'to do' list.

2.1.8 Due to Covid-19 there were no published National Achievement Rates tables for 2019/20.

2.1.9 Overall, the College believes the delivery of outstanding quality is its overriding priority in the context of a volatile post-COVID external environment.

2.2 The Policy and Funding Environment

2.2.1 As the country emerges from the COVID-19 pandemic we move forward and live in different times.

2.2.2 The College has successfully moved to online learning during the periods of lockdown, working from home, although challenging has been successful and Teacher Assessed Grades (TAGs) have been completed within stringent guidelines.

2.2.3 We will continue to work very closely with Halton Borough Council, Liverpool City Region and the Association of Colleges to implement advice and guidance to

operate in a safe environment and contribute to the recovery plans at local, regional and national level.

- 2.2.4 There are concerns about the volatility of recruitment in all areas of provision and the subsequent funding implications. However, 16-18 recruitment appears buoyant (+250 offers), apprenticeship and HE recruitment is in line with pre-COVID figures and the College is planning to offer a full range of provision to suit the needs of adult learners who need retraining and re-skilling.
- 2.2.5 Flexibility has to be built into our planning so that we are in a position to respond to rapid and demanding changes as the country recovers.
- 2.2.6 The challenges for the Autumn term, September 2021
- i More young people – aged 16 to 25 – needing college places due to high unemployment and young people being crowded out of jobs.
 - ii A large cohort of young people needing support to catch up in learning after several months of lockdown.
 - iii A shortage of apprenticeship training places for new recruits and the potential for many apprentices to be made redundant.
 - iv Large numbers of adults requiring training to help them move from sectors in most difficulties into those which might expand.
- 2.2.7 The overall message from the sector is that colleges are vital to the recovery and stand ready to deliver but need continued investment and flexibilities to support more young people, adults, communities and employers. The response from Government has been positive so far and endorsed by the Skills and Post-16 Education Bill. However, this needs to turn into long term additional and stable funding.
- 2.2.8 The pace of change and the wholly uncertain environment clearly poses risks to the College however it is in a very strong position in terms of quality and financial health (both rated outstanding by Ofsted and ESFA) and is able to respond quickly to the challenges ahead.
- Over £25m invested in teaching and learning facilities since 2012 whilst maintaining outstanding financial health. The £18m in capital project spend, including the health and wellbeing facility at Cronton and the green technology hub at Kingsway. Both projects to be completed by August 2023.
 - Turnover has increased from £20m in 2016/2017 to £29m in 2021/2022. The College's main income streams 16-18 and Adult are secure for 2020/2021 and this accounts for 85% of income.



2.3 16-18 Students

2.3.1 The College set a target of recruiting 3,000 16-18-year-old students by 2020; this target was achieved in 2017 despite declining demographics and increasing competition and this has had a positive impact on the financial plan to 2020 and beyond.

16-18 learner number and allocations

2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
2,521	2,681	2,741	3,019	3,100	3,223	3,304	3,433

2.3.2 The College has increased its 16-18 provision by 36% since 2014/15 and believes that there is the potential to increase recruitment of 16-18-year-old students through the high-quality provision, the opening of the new technology facilities and the demographic upturn. These are opportunities to persuade more students from Halton and outside the borough to choose our College. Application and offers for school leavers are ahead of last year and current projections indicate that our 16-18 income will increase by 4% for 2021/2022.

2.4 Apprenticeships

- 2.4.1 The College is in a strong position to respond to the challenges and impact of the Covid pandemic and will build on the strengths identified by Ofsted as an Outstanding Apprenticeship Provider to support employers, individuals and the local community to 'build back better'.
- 2.4.2 Existing markets will be consolidated and new relationships generated, especially with employers across the region in key priority sectors.
- 2.4.3 We will build on the success of offering apprenticeships as progression routes from our full time, work placement and traineeship programmes.
- 2.4.4 There will be continued investment in new facilities and digital offers to increase flexibility and improve delivery efficiency.

2.5 19+ Adult Education

2.5.1 The Adult Education Budget (AEB) comes from two sources, the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and the Liverpool City Region (LCR), this budget is secure for 2021/2022.

- 2.5.2 The College, through the Merseyside Colleges Association (MCA), is working with the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCRCA) on recovery and retraining packages for adult learners after the success of short adult courses offered in 2021 in Engineering, Digital and Health and Social Care.



2.6 Higher Education

In 2021/22 the College aims to build upon its Higher Education offer by exploring further curriculum pathways at Level 4 and above. Riverside College continues to be a much-valued member of the Staffordshire University Collaborative Partnership and is also a partner provider in Shaping Futures (the Merseyside Collaborative Outreach Programme) - a Higher Education Outreach Programme for the Liverpool City Region. In June 2019, the College was awarded the TEF Gold Award for the quality of its higher education provision.

2.7 Community Confidence

The OUTSTANDING Ofsted grade has secured community confidence and established the College as a high-quality provider of education and training. This achievement is the result of a decade of work with key stakeholders. The College Management Team are involved in the key task groups, governing bodies, trustees of MATs, IFATE, MCA, Ofsted and a whole range of bodies offering advice and guidance to all phases of education.

2.8 Working in Partnership

2.8.1 The College wishes to continue to work closely with partners. In the context of more diverse post-16 provision, it is important to maintain support for a successful, strong and viable college in Halton.

2.8.2 The College has made the following commitments:

1. We will consistently perform as a high-quality college.
2. We will address the issue of those Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) in a collaborative and creative way.
3. We will increase the percentage of young people achieving Levels 2 and 3 by the age of 19.
4. We will work towards closing the gap in attainment between those who were in receipt of free school meals and those who were not.

5. We will increase the number of young people starting on apprenticeships and traineeships.
6. We will seek to address the needs of people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who need clear progression routes within Halton.
7. We will respond positively to the requirement for young people to stay in education or training until they are 18 and beyond.
8. We will contribute fully to addressing local educational needs and priorities, by implementing the plans of the Halton Teaching Alliance where the College sits on the Strategic Board.
9. We will engage with partners to work towards key targets for adults with the adult learning team at Halton Borough Council and the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCRCA).
10. We will work with partners to expand higher education opportunities in Halton. This year our Access to HE programme has expanded and we have introduced the HNC in Performing Arts (Technical Arts).
11. We will seek to deliver an inclusive curriculum for the residents of Halton notwithstanding the impact of changing funding sources and levels.
12. We will work with Halton employers and the Chamber of Commerce to produce training for workers. We will focus on dynamic local sectors such as construction, engineering, science and technology.
13. We will play a significant role in the development of an Education and Health Hub as part of the Runcorn Town Deal.
14. We will work with the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) and the Growth Platform to contribute to the skills strategy for the Liverpool City Region:
 - CreaTech and Digital
 - Advanced Manufacturing
 - Health and Life Sciences
 - Energy
 - Built Environment
15. We will embrace the opportunities the Freeport will bring.

3.1 Monitoring of Performance

Quality Improvement Plans (QIPs) will be produced for all curriculum and support areas. These will be monitored throughout the year by

- i. the quality improvement cycle as part of the self-assessment process;
- ii. the QEG (Quality, Efficiency and Growth) which summarises areas for improvement; where emerging concerns are identified bespoke recovery plans will be implemented immediately; and
- iii. Senior Management Team (SMT) Monitoring meetings – 3 times per year.

3.2 Reporting Outcomes

Outcomes and external assurances will be reported to Governors through Committee and Board meetings by

- i. the QEG (Quality, Efficiency and Growth) report;
- ii. dashboards for finance and quality;
- iii. strategic update reports by the Senior Management Team; and
- iv. reports by auditors, Ofsted, Office for Students, performance tables and funding bodies.