

**Riverside
College**
Widnes & Runcorn

**CRANTON
SIXTHFORM
COLLEGE**

STRATEGIC PLAN 2024-2025



Ofsted Outstanding 2024

CONTENTS

	Page
Chapter 1 Vision, Values and Strategic Aims	3
Chapter 2 2.1 Internal/External Assessment	5
2.2 The Policy and Funding Environment	
Chapter 3 Monitoring Performance 2023/24	14

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 as skills needs.



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**, aligned to meet sector skills needs.

Strategic Aims

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

We will do this by:

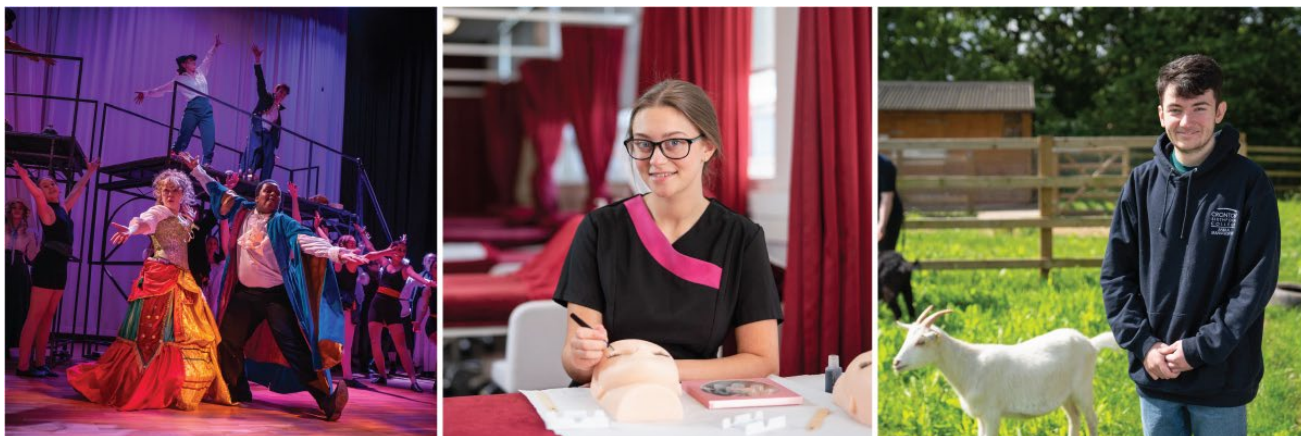
- 1.1 Prioritising the delivery of outstanding **quality** in terms of teaching, learning and assessment and the student experience so that all our students progress and reach their potential.
 - 1.2 Striving to create a college community with core values at its heart.
 - 1.3 Nurturing our students and 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 Carefully and cautiously embracing Artificial Intelligence to enhance our daily working routines – Artificial Intelligence Strategy 2024.
 - 1.8 Implementing and maintaining a wide curriculum offer that meets sector skills needs of the local, regional and national stakeholders.
- 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 with a focus on Hydrogen.
- 3 To maximise opportunities for **growth**, aligned to meet sector skills needs

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 through alignment with the Local Skills Investment Plan (LSIP) and the Liverpool City Region Long Term Skills Plan.



2.1 External and Internal Assessment

2.1.1 In April 2024, Ofsted judged the College to be Outstanding.

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

- *Teachers and assessors use **especially effective** teaching and assessment strategies.*
- *Staff at all levels have **high aspirations** for their learners and apprentices. Consequently, learners and apprentices who study here do **exceptionally well***
- *Teachers and assessors help learners to **achieve high grades** and produce work consistently to a **very high standard***
- *Teachers and trainers are well qualified and benefit from **high-quality professional development** that develops their subject knowledge and expertise*
- *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: [50249456 \(ofsted.gov.uk\)](https://www.ofsted.gov.uk/inspections/50249456)

2.1.2 Alongside Ofsted the College receives a number of external assessments throughout the year including Department for Education (DfE) performance tables; Quality Monitoring Reviews (QMRs); Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) audit; learner and employer surveys; MATRIX Award; the Higher Education Annual Partner Review, the Annual Strategic Conversation with ESFA and FEC (Further Education Commissioner), and the External Review of Governance, all of which acknowledge excellent performance and high levels of satisfaction.

The College was one of 13 providers in England to be selected for the Expert Provider of Apprenticeships pilot and works closely with the Department for Education in simplifying systems to make apprenticeships more accessible.

2.1.3 In Autumn 2023 the College produced a Self-Assessment Report (SAR) for 2022/2023, with the following grades:

Overall judgements	Ofsted Grade 2020	SAR Grade 2021/2022	SAR Grade 2022/2023	Ofsted Grade 2024 (TBC)
The Quality of Education	Grade 1: Outstanding	Grade 1: Outstanding	Grade 1: Outstanding	Grade 1: Outstanding
Behaviour and Attitudes	Grade 1: Outstanding	Grade 1: Outstanding	Grade 1: Outstanding	Grade 1: Outstanding
Personal Development	Grade 1: Outstanding	Grade 1: Outstanding	Grade 1: Outstanding	Grade 1: Outstanding
Leadership and Management	Grade 1: Outstanding	Grade 1: Outstanding	Grade 1: Outstanding	Grade 1: Outstanding
Education Programmes for Young People	Grade 1: Outstanding	Grade 1: Outstanding	Grade 1: Outstanding	Grade 1: Outstanding
Adult Learning Programmes	Grade 1: Outstanding	Grade 1: Outstanding	Grade 1: Outstanding	Grade 1: Outstanding
Apprenticeships	Grade 1: Outstanding	Grade 1: Outstanding	Grade 1: Outstanding	Grade 1:
Provision for Learners with High Needs	Grade 2: Good	Grade 2: Good	Grade 2: Good	Grade 2: Good

2.1.4 The following key strengths were identified:

1. Highly effective leadership and management, at all levels, has ensured the quality of provision and support for students has remained high following the challenges of a global pandemic.

2. Judgements from external agencies evidence that the College is outstanding. This includes Ofsted: Grade 1; Teaching Excellence Framework (most recent): Gold; Matrix Award, DfE Expert Provider for apprenticeships, the DfE publication 'A guide to effective practice in approaching cultural change in colleges' and ESFA Financial Rating: Outstanding
3. Health and well-being of staff and students are of the highest importance. A culture of self-improvement and continuous improvement permeates the College.
4. Students make excellent progress whilst at the College. Achievement rates continue to be high for almost all learners
5. 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
6. Teachers and trainers are well qualified and benefit from high-quality professional development that develops their subject knowledge and expertise
7. Outstanding financial management has led to economic stability and effective deployment of resources and significant investment in facilities for teaching and learning
8. Leaders, managers and teachers have developed a high-quality curriculum that widens learners' and apprentices' experiences and life skills
9. Arrangements for safeguarding are highly effective in an area of increasing demand
10. Leaders have exceptional links with local employers and regional business groups, including the LCR Combined Authority, Chambers of Commerce, Halton Employment Partnership and regional mayoral authorities.

2.1.5 The Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) 2023/24 identified the key areas for improvement:

1. Further improve the quality of education for learners in the foundation studies department to ensure the more confident learners make rapid progress
2. Further improve the quality of education for the small minority of courses that are not yet outstanding.
3. Monitor the retention on two-year programmes to ensure an increase in achievement rates.

2.1.6 The College aims to swiftly and robustly address these areas for improvement. Further details are in the Quality, Efficiency, Growth (QEG) Plan which acts as the College's 'to do' list.

2.1.7 National Achievement Rate Tables for 2022/23 were published at the end of the academic year. The College were in the top third of colleges and the highest in the Liverpool City region.

2.1.8 The financial health of the College remains OUTSTANDING by the ESFA assessment for the tenth year.

2.2 The Policy and Funding Environment

2.2.1 As the country awaits the outcomes of the General Election, the AoC launched Opportunity England, the vision for colleges in the future followed by 100% Opportunity: the case for a tertiary education system, with recommendations on how colleges can be supported to thrive and grow within it. The College

embraces the contents of these reports and believes it is well on the way to achieving the recommendations.

- 2.2.2 The increase in 16-18 funding rates is welcomed by the College but rising costs and the lack of funding rate increase in the Adult Skills Fund, Apprenticeships and Higher Education budgets continue to be incredibly challenging for the college sector.
- 2.2.3 With the cost-of-living crisis continuing, the challenges for colleges on pay is extreme. Last year the College agreed an average pay award of 9.5%. This year 2024/2025, the Unions claim is for 10% rise. We will be fair in our pay award and endeavour to build upon the pay awards we have sustained for eight years. Much depends on recruitment to all programmes in 2024/25.
- 2.2.4 Recruitment and retention of teaching and support staff remains an issue for the College and the wider sector. The Covid pandemic left the legacy of different ways of working and the ability to match pay in schools is thwarted by funding levels. However, the College's pay scale now matches those of schools and sixth form colleges and a new proposal of flexible working options, including at 2pm finish on Fridays will go some way to alleviating these issues.
- 2.2.5 The mental health and wellbeing of our staff and students remains of utmost importance. We will continue to invest in practice and emotional support for students provided by our Programme Management teams and by encouraging participation in inspiring enrichment opportunities. For our staff, we have launched a new staff benefit, the Employee Assistance Programme as part of our Health and Wellbeing Plan introduced in 2021.
- 2.2.6 Qualification reform and defunding - the College will offer 4 T-Levels in August 2024 and will monitor demand for this new provision, whilst ensuring that we meet the needs of our locality. We strongly support the case that Level 3 qualifications are not defunded until T-Levels are tried and tested and would support Labour's Pause and Review proposal.
- 2.2.7 We will continue to follow the Climate Action Roadmap for FE Colleges, published as part of the Department for Education's Sustainability and Climate Action Strategy in 2022. We are currently progressing towards the 'established' stage. A strategic group will continue to meet regularly to monitor progress against our net zero target by 2030.
- 2.2.6 The plethora of Bills, Green and White Papers and consultations have been introduced in 2022 have all started to be implemented.
- i. *Skills and Post-16 Education Act – April 2022 (Skills Bill)*
This Act puts employers at the heart of the skills system, by placing a legal requirement on colleges to work with employers to develop skills plans to meet the needs of the local area. The employer responsive body leading the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) for Halton and the wider Liverpool City Region (LCR) was the Chamber of Commerce led by St Helens Chamber, who unfortunately went into administration in February 2024. The contract has been transferred to Liverpool Chamber of Commerce. The LCR colleges have been working collaboratively on the Local Skills Investment Fund (LSIF) to deliver the LSIP. Alongside the LSIP and LSIF, the College will submit an Accountability Agreement for 2024/2025 to DfE to demonstrate how we are meeting the LSIP. The Strategic Development Fund (SDF), the precursor to the LSIP/LSIF has been successful and the College officially opened the Hydrogen

Training Centre in March 2024, leading the way for the region in this area. Ofsted’s remit to check that colleges are meeting skills needs resulted in a judgement 'The College makes a strong contribution to meeting skills needs (April 2024).

- 2.2.8 At regional level we will continue to collaborate with the Association of Liverpool City Region Colleges (AoLCRC) and the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCRCA) to deliver the LSIP and the Long-Term Skills Plan, including the Freeport and the Skills Investment Zone opportunities.
- 2.2.9 More locally the College is a main partner in Reconnecting Runcorn, the Town Deal (DLUHC) awarded in 2020. Working with NHS partners to open an education and health hub in Runcorn town centre, one of seven projects to regenerate the town and due to open in 2025/2026.
- 2.2.10 The Local Authority are currently preparing the Children and Young People Plan under the banner headline ‘Aiming High for Halton’s Children and Young People, 2024-2030’. Not only does the College make a major contribution to the plan, it also includes special thanks to our students “that helped design the plan and took the photographs that it contains”.
- 2.2.11 The pace of change, the uncertain political environment, and the coordination of the Government policies clearly carries risks to the College. However, the College remains in a very strong position in terms of quality and financial health (both rated OUTSTANDING by Ofsted and ESFA) and can respond swiftly to the challenges presented in the year ahead.

The College has

- Invested over £30m in teaching and learning facilities since 2017, whilst maintaining outstanding financial health. This includes the health, wellbeing and sport facilities at Cronton and the Hydrogen Training Centre at Riverside.
- In 2024/25 the College plans to invest £19m in improving the Kingsway fascia (£6.4m), Green Technology Centre at Kingsway (£6.8m) and the Music Hub and teaching block at Cronton (£5.8m).
- Turnover has increased from £20m in 2016/17 to £36m in 2023/24 (76% increase). The College’s main income streams (16-18 and Adult) are secure for 2024/25 and this accounts for 78% of income.



2.3 16-18 Students

2.3.1 16-18 learner number allocations

2015/16	2021/22	2024/25
---------	---------	---------

2,681	3,433	3675
-------	-------	------

2.3.2 The College has increased its 16-18 provision by 37% since 2015/16 and continues to focus on high quality provision and the opening of the new technology facilities to persuade more students from Halton and outside the Borough to choose our College. Applications and offers for school leavers are significantly ahead of last year and recruitment is expected to increase again in September 2024.

2.4 Apprenticeships

2.4.1 We will continue to provide high quality apprenticeships to support employers, individuals and the local community to respond to skills shortages and current challenges with the labour market.

2.4.2 Existing markets will be consolidated, and new relationships generated especially with employers across the region in key priority sectors including those identified in the Local Skills Improvement Plan. Employers will be encouraged to participate in forums and curriculum development activities to ensure apprenticeships are tailored to local needs

2.4.3 We will continue to achieve excellent employer and apprenticeship feedback as part of the Apprenticeship Accountability Framework

2.4.4 We will build on the success of offering apprenticeships as progression routes from our full time, work placement and T Level programmes.

2.4.5 There will be continued investment in new facilities and digital offers to increase flexibility and efficiency for apprentices and employers.

2.5 19+ Adult Education

2.5.1 The Adult Education Budget (AEB) becomes the Adult Skills Fund (ASF) from August 2024 and comes from two sources, the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and the Liverpool City Region (LCR), this budget is secure for 2024/2025 including the Multiply initiative.

2.5.2 The College, through the Association of Liverpool City Region Colleges (AoLCRC), 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 2022/2023 in Engineering, Digital and Health and Social Care.



2.6 Higher Education

In 2024/2025 the College aims to build upon its Higher Education offer by exploring further curriculum pathways, including HTQs (Higher Technical Qualifications), at Level 4 and above, while enhancing its current offer in collaboration with HE (Higher Education) students and monitoring of outcomes. 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.

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 over a decade of work with key stakeholders. The College Management Team are involved in the key task groups, governing bodies, trustees of MATs, IFATE (Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education), AoLCRC, Ofsted, Expert Provider Apprenticeships 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 partner with high quality subcontractors to supply the best teaching and learning experience for students and to extend the reach of provision to people and communities that would not normally engage with traditional college programmes. We will retain the Subcontracting Standard to do this.
4. We will increase the percentage of young people achieving Levels 2 and 3 by the age of 19.
5. We will work towards closing the gap in attainment between those who were in receipt of free school meals and those who were not.
6. We will increase the number of young people starting on apprenticeships and continue to support SMEs and Level 2 and 3 Apprenticeship Standards. Priority will be given to full time students to progress onto apprenticeships via work experience opportunities.
7. We will seek to address the needs of people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who need clear progression routes within Halton and continue to lead on the Halton Inclusion Partnership.
8. We will contribute fully to addressing local educational needs and priorities, by implementing the recommendations of the Children and Young People Plan – Aiming High for Halton’s Children & Young People 2024-2030.

9. We will work to promote the value and transferability of maths and English skills in order to close skills gaps and support our learners in gaining a qualification in these subjects, while also ensuring maths and English skills for industry are positively promoted and embedded in all subject curriculums to improve learner employment and social mobility opportunities.
10. We will work collaboratively with our feeder schools as part of the Borough PEIA project to close skills gaps in maths and English in 16-18 learners to best support them in achieving a Level 2 qualification in these subjects whilst studying at the College.
11. 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).
12. 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 Construction and HND in Performing Arts (Technical Arts).
13. We will seek to deliver an inclusive curriculum for the residents of Halton notwithstanding the impact of changing funding sources and levels.
14. We will work with Halton employers and Chambers of Commerce to produce workforce training programmes. We will focus on dynamic local sectors such as Construction, Engineering, Science and Technology, including Green Energy.
15. We will utilise our partnership in the Education and Health Hub in Runcorn (as part of the Runcorn Town Deal), to develop a responsive and agile curriculum ready for the Hub opening in 2025/2026. This will include supporting employability and skills needs of the Health Sector.
16. We will work with the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (LCRCA) and Growth Platform to contribute to the skills strategy for the Liverpool City Region, focussing on sector specific demand including:
 - CreaTech and Digital
 - Advanced Manufacturing
 - Health and Life Sciences
 - Energy
 - Built Environment
17. We will embrace the opportunities provided by the Freeport and Life Sciences Investment Zone.

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;
the Quality, Efficiency and Growth (QEG) report which summarises areas for improvement; where emerging concerns are identified, bespoke recovery plans will be implemented immediately; and
- ii. 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 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.
- v. the outcomes from the Annual Strategic Conversation with the ESFA/DfE and LCRCA.