

External Governance Review – November and December 2023

The Abingdon & Witney College External Governance Review took place during November and December 2023. The final report following the review summarised several key strengths that underline the College's robust governance framework. These included:

A positive culture characterised by transparency, trust, mutual respect, and constructive challenge is a cornerstone of the College, led by the Principal/CEO and the Chair, with strong support from governors and the Senior Management Team (SMT). The governors bring a wealth of relevant skills and experience, enhancing oversight, decision-making, and ensuring statutory compliance. They are well-guided by leadership to distinguish between governance and management roles effectively.

Governors are actively involved in strategic planning, demonstrating a firm commitment to achieving the College's strategic goals for 2022-26. They prioritise learner-centric decision-making, maintaining a balanced focus on educational quality and financial management. The Board ensures sufficient attention to the student experience and effective engagement opportunities for governors.

The College's financial oversight is notably strong, with effective governance at both Corporation and committee levels. The Audit Committee, led by an experienced governor, excels in risk oversight. Safeguarding is a priority, with comprehensive training for all governors. Governance processes are efficient, meetings are well-conducted, and the new Clerk and Governance Adviser effectively manages governance activities.

The review also provided some key recommendation to ensure the college is aligned fully with sector expectations, procedural recommendations include some updates to governance documents, conducting an updated and comprehensive skills audit of members and maintaining up-to-date governance information on the College website. The reviewers also shared best practice and innovations from the sector to suggest further development and enhancement of current practice. The college has welcomed the feedback from the review and has been able to begin implementing these actions.