

Accountability Statement

2026/27



The Group's Purpose

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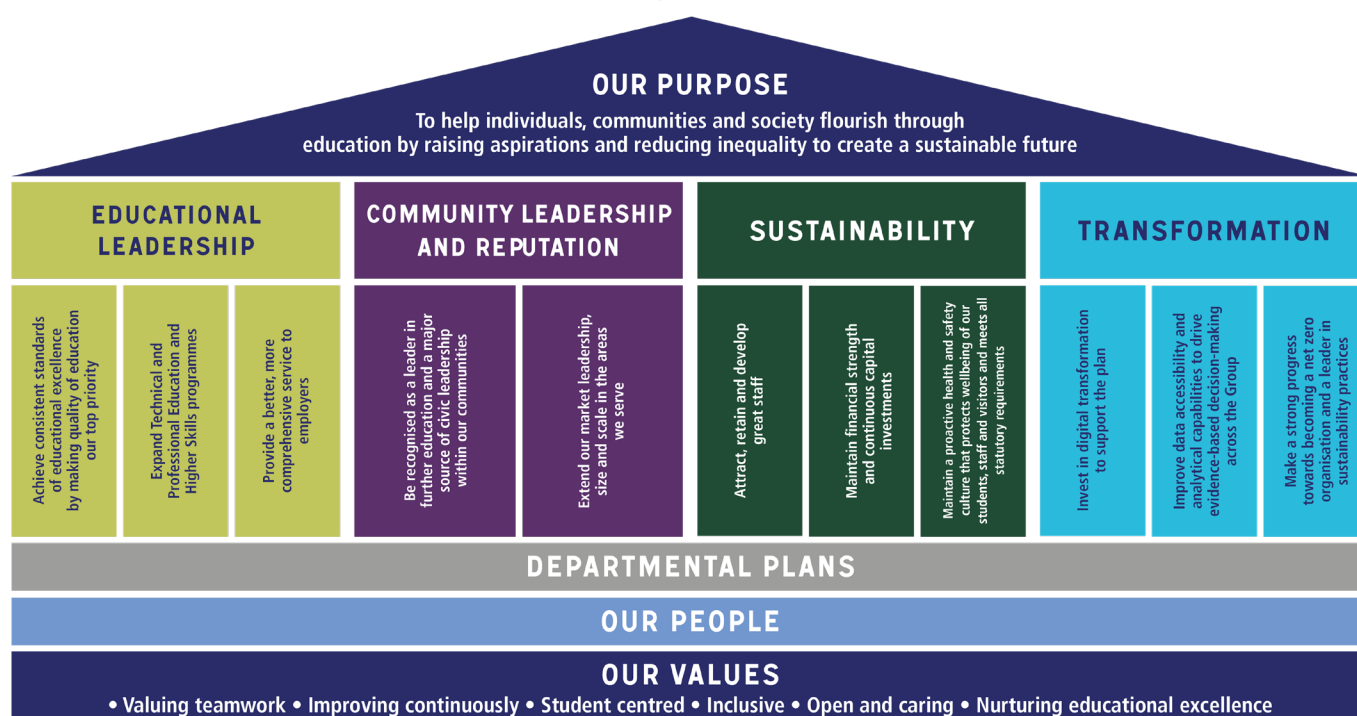
The Bedford College Group's (TBCG) purpose is to help individuals, communities and society flourish through education by raising aspirations and reducing inequality to create a sustainable future. This is achieved through our relentless focus on community needs which drives our curriculum provision, determines our people and sets our budget priorities.

To guide our approach are our six core values:

- **VALUING TEAMWORK:** We are one team who by working together can achieve great things, respecting the opinion and valuing the contribution each of us makes
- **IMPROVING CONTINUOUSLY:** We challenge ourselves to always do better by trying new things, sharing knowledge, reflecting on practice and learning from others
- **STUDENT CENTRED:** At our heart is always doing what is best for our students. We consider students in all of our decision making to create positive outcomes and memorable experiences for every student
- **INCLUSIVE:** We celebrate differences and diversity, recognising that we can learn from each other
- **OPEN AND CARING:** We care about the wellbeing of our staff, our students, our community and wider society, creating an environment built on trust where we listen, engage with and support each other
- **NURTURING EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE:** We promote educational excellence by delivering programmes that stretch and challenge our students to achieve their ambitions

OUR VISION

To be the best and most authoritative post-16 educator in the South East Midlands



The Group's Purpose

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STRATEGIC AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Our strategic plan outlines how we will achieve our purpose and vision to be the best and most authoritative post-16 education provider in the South East Midlands, and is underpinned by four strategic pillars: 1) educational leadership; 2) community leadership and reputation; 3) sustainability and 4) transformation.

The plan was developed in consultation with key stakeholders and approved by the Board on 20 January 2022, with further refinements made to the plan in June 2024.

The plan has eleven key aims for the period ending 2027:

- To achieve consistent standards of educational excellence by making quality of education our top priority
- To expand Technical and Professional education and higher skills programmes
- To provide a better, more comprehensive service to employers
- To be recognised as a leader in further education and a major source of civic leadership within our communities

- To expand our market leadership, size and scale in the areas we serve
- To attract, retain and develop great staff
- To maintain financial strength and continuous capital investment
- To invest in digital transformation to support the plan
- To make strong progress towards becoming a net zero organisation and a leader in sustainability practices
- To maintain a proactive health and safety culture that protects the wellbeing of our students, staff and visitors and meets all statutory requirements
- To improve data accessibility and analytical capabilities to drive evidenced-based decision-making across the Group.

The link between our strategic plan and the objectives and targets in this statement is outlined in Section 5, and can be found at [Strategic Plan | The Bedford College Group](#)



THE COMMUNITIES WE SERVE

TBCG is the largest college group in the South East Midlands, with over 18,000 students each year attending one of our eight colleges based across Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire: Bedford College, Central Bedfordshire College and Tresham College in the towns of Bedford, Corby, Dunstable, Kettering, Leighton Buzzard and Wellingborough; Shuttleworth College, a specialist land-based college near Biggleswade; The Bedford Sixth Form and The Corby Sixth Form, the only dedicated A-Level provision in Bedford and Corby; the National College for Motorsport alongside Silverstone race circuit; and the National College for Logistics based in Leighton Buzzard. In addition, to widen accessibility to education and training, the Group also has community-based Learning Centres in Bedford, Corby, Kettering and Wellingborough.

90% of TBCG's students live in the South East Midlands region, with 85% residing in just four local authorities: Bedford Borough, Central Bedfordshire, Luton and North Northamptonshire. The Group are viewed as a major strategic asset within these authorities and works in partnership with key stakeholders to ensure the economic, social and skills needs of each community is met through its broad curriculum spanning further education, adult education, apprenticeships, workforce training and higher technical education.



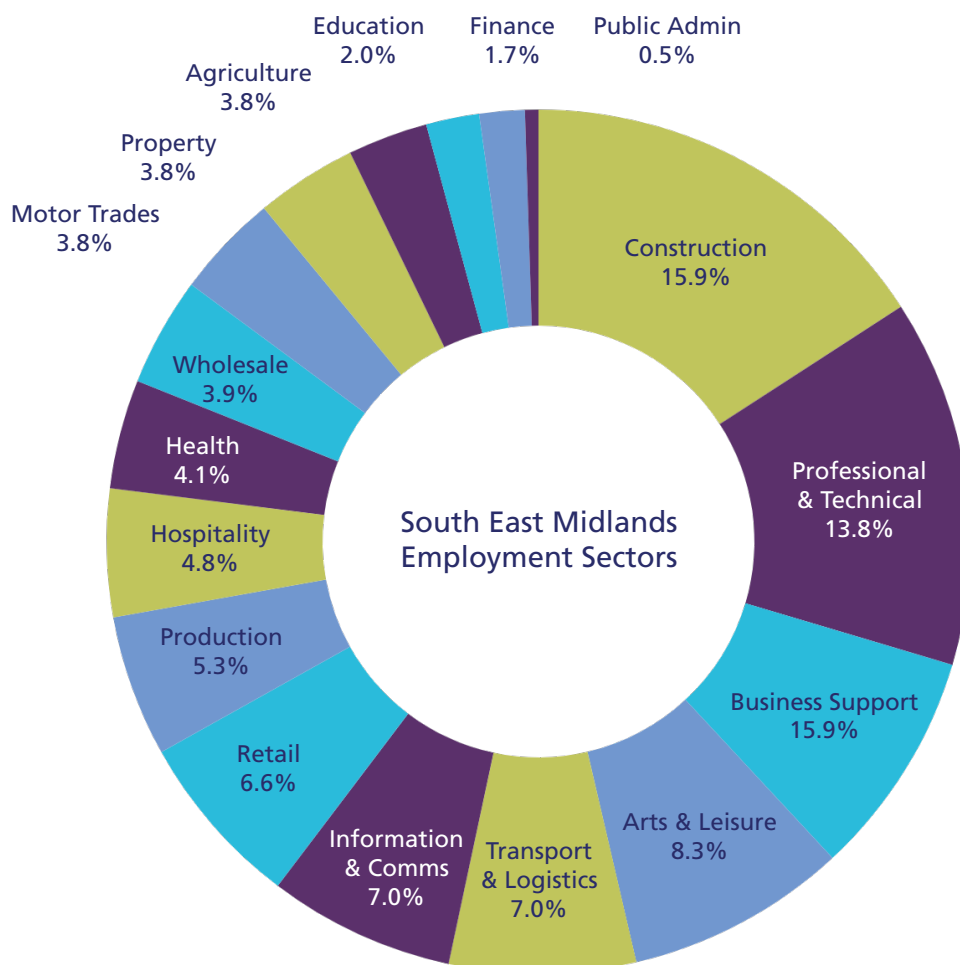
BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC PROFILE

The South East Midlands is a £55 billion economy¹³, with a total of 74,180 businesses across the region. There is a slightly higher concentration of micro businesses with fewer than 10 employees (90.2%) compared to the national picture (89.2%), and a slightly lower concentration of small businesses with 10-49 employees (7.8% compared to 8.8% nationally). The proportion of medium (1.5%) and large businesses (0.4%) is broadly in line with national levels.

The main employment sectors in the region are Construction, Professional, Scientific & Technical, Business Admin & Support, Arts, Entertainment, Recreation & Other services and Transport & Storage.

Get Britain Working – South Midlands plan highlights the scale and growth of the regional economy.

The South Midlands supports around 881,000 jobs within a £56 billion economy, which has grown by 19% over the past five years. Between 2014 and 2024, employment increased by 122,000 jobs (+14.3%), significantly outpacing national growth. Key sectors include transport and storage (87,000 jobs), health and social care (102,000 jobs), and professional services, reflecting the region's strategic location and economic diversity.



DEMOGRAPHICS

The Group serves a population of approximately 1.11 million people across the four key local authorities of Bedford Borough, Central Bedfordshire, Luton and North Northamptonshire, based on the latest ONS estimates.

These areas continue to experience sustained population growth. Projections indicate the total population will increase by a further 9.0% by 2032, with the highest growth expected in Central Bedfordshire (14.3%) and Bedford Borough (11.0%), reflecting ongoing housing and economic expansion across the region.

The ethnic profile varies significantly across the Group's footprint. Central Bedfordshire and North Northamptonshire remain less diverse, with over 90% of residents identifying as White, compared to 81.0% nationally. In contrast, Luton and Bedford Borough have much more diverse populations, with 37.0% of Luton residents identifying as Asian or Asian British and 10.1% as Black, alongside 12.6% and 5.3% respectively in Bedford Borough.



SOCIAL FACTORS

The region presents a mixed picture of deprivation and socio-economic challenge across the four local authorities. Luton is among the most deprived areas, ranked 33rd out of 296 local authorities overall and 16th for education, skills and training, highlighting significant challenges in educational outcomes and progression. In contrast, Central Bedfordshire is one of the least deprived areas, ranking 230th overall and 159th for education and skills, while Bedford Borough (126th) and North Northamptonshire (160th) sit closer to the national midpoint, although both rank 88th for education, skills and training, indicating persistent skills-related challenges across parts of the area.

Child poverty remains a key issue, with clear disparities across the region. Luton has a significantly higher proportion of children living in relative low-income families at 31.7%, compared to the UK average of 19.3%. Bedford (17.8%) and North Northamptonshire (18.9%) are broadly in line with national levels, while Central Bedfordshire has a notably lower rate at 11.7%.

Educational attainment across the region is uneven and, in several areas, below national benchmarks. North Northamptonshire has the lowest proportion of residents qualified at Level 4 and above (35.8%), well below the national average of 47.2%, while Bedford (44.3%) and Luton (45.1%) also fall below national levels. Central Bedfordshire performs more strongly, with 47.2% of residents qualified at Level 4 and above, in line with the national average. At Level 3 and above, attainment remains below national levels in Bedford, Luton and North Northamptonshire, particularly in Luton (61.6%) and North Northamptonshire (60.4%) compared to 67.6% nationally.

A higher proportion of residents have no qualifications in Luton (10.6%), North Northamptonshire (9.3%) and Bedford (8.3%) compared to the national average of 6.8%, whereas Central Bedfordshire performs more favourably at 3.9%. Overall, this highlights persistent skills gaps across key parts of the region, particularly in Luton and North Northamptonshire, alongside comparatively stronger outcomes in Central Bedfordshire.

Approach to Developing the Accountability Statement

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The key priorities and target outcomes in this accountability statement have been developed following a review of the government's national skills priorities, including the Industrial Strategy 8. Additionally, the work the Group leads in the Construction Technical Excellence College, the networks and links that have been forged for new projects in the Region such as Universal, and through early engagement in LSIP 2.0 have been instrumental in shaping the targets. These have all been used to help to shape the priorities along with our labour market information and feedback from stakeholders. There have been a number of internal stakeholder discussions, and reports to governors on the progress of the 2025/2026 Accountability Agreement and these have helped to shape this agreement.

Additionally, the Group actively engage with Northamptonshire Chamber of Commerce and Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce to collect stakeholder views and input into the development of local skills, and is working closely with other education and training providers and employer representative bodies to respond to the priorities identified. The Group has had a leading role in the skills work of the Ox-Cam Growth Corridor, as well as taking a leading role in the North Northamptonshire Place Board. The Group has over 20 employer academies and has launched Employer Advisory Boards all of whom provide the opportunity for us to co-construct the curriculum.

The priorities also align with TBCG Curriculum Strategy which aims to provide all students with the skills they need to build a successful career.

The Strategy is based on the development of human, social, and cultural capital individuals need to thrive in the World. The Strategy was launched in June 2025 following extensive consultation and research. TBCG supports employers to meet their skills needs by delivering a high-quality suite of technical and academic qualifications that anticipate and supply skills of the future workforce, as well as meet the local skills needs of the communities we serve.

KEY STAKEHOLDERS

Key to achieving our strategic objectives and meeting the skills needs of our communities is effective stakeholder engagement. TBCG has a multi-faceted approach to stakeholder engagement, with key college stakeholders having a senior manager assigned to them to foster mutually beneficial partnerships, such as:

- Bedford Borough Council
- North Northamptonshire Council
- Central Bedfordshire Council
- Strategically important employers, such as GK Aerospace, Tata Steel, the NHS
- Chambers of Commerce in Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire
- Northamptonshire Business Network (NNBN)
- Local MPs and Mayors.

In addition, curriculum teams lead on developing relationships with local employers and community links to jointly develop the curriculum and provide opportunities to students.



Approach to Developing the Accountability Statement

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ENGAGEMENT WITH OTHER PROVIDERS IN THE AREA

Schools

We engage with over 80 secondary schools across the South East Midlands to complement our provision, widen the career opportunities for local school pupils and enable transition to post-16 education. We are a member of the Bedford Borough Learning Exchange, a collaboration of over 100 head teachers and leaders of education across the area, and the Sixth Form Heads Exchange in Corby. Tresham College also leads the education and skills work as part of North Northamptonshire's Big 50 project which sets out the future aspirations for the area.

Universities

In addition to having our own direct higher skills provision, we partner with the University of Bedfordshire, University of Huddersfield and University of Northampton so that we can provide a broad portfolio of higher-level qualifications to our communities, such as HNCs, HNDs, degrees, Higher Apprenticeships and Higher Technical Qualifications (HTQs). Through these partnerships we have a positive impact on regional economic growth by meeting the growing skills needs of employers and industry, and expanding the availability of higher skills courses locally to improve social mobility and increase the number of skilled people at Level 4 and above. The Group and the University of Bedfordshire have established a partnership and launched 'Skills Bedfordshire' to build skills ladders across the area to respond to significant developments in the Region.

Broader Partnerships

TBCG is part of the Colleges of South East Midlands Group (CoSEM), whose members are Luton Sixth Form College, Milton Keynes College, Moulton College, Northampton College and West Herts College Group. The Group is a founding member of the Further Education & Skills Alliance (FESA) which has been established to support the skills needs of the Ox-Cam Growth Corridor. This builds on the work the TBCG led to form a Skills Commission for the Growth Corridor.

CTEC

TBCG is the national Hub for CTEC and, as such, has worked with the Department for Education to lead the Theory of Change model for CTECs (and future TECs) as well as lead the development of data observatories and hold the key CTEC partnerships with organisations such as CITB. Regionally, the College has brought spokes together across the South East Midlands to develop a work plan to respond to the significant infrastructure developments in the Region. This work is referenced in the Regional LSIP.

Responding to LSIP

TBCG has engaged effectively with the ERB, through a number of events, with the development of the Regional LSIP. Additionally, to ensure effective translation of the National LSIP specification 2.0 TBCG has undertaken a series of activities such as:

- Mapping the work at all levels against the IS8, with the employer partnerships that are in place
- Building on the sustainability work in LSIP 1.0 and responding to the Green Energy challenge in LSIP 2.0 through a new Sustainability Strategy and subsequent actions
- Developing NEET approaches to NEET reduction through the development of a Post-16 Transition Strategy, a new NEET reduction programme, and by working with the Careers Hub to develop a NEET reduction pilot project in Bedfordshire.

These approaches are helping to create the roadmap to closing skills gaps through collaborative endeavour. As an anchor institution TBCG is leading the convening of partnerships to respond to the Regional challenges and opportunities.

Contribution to National, Regional and Local Priorities

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In our previous Accountability Statement, we set out a series of targets to achieve in the academic year 2024 to 2025. As a result, we have:

- Expanded apprenticeship and commercial offers in response to skills needs at a local, regional and national level in construction (interior systems installer, fitted interiors installer), engineering (health care engineering specialist technician, lean manufacturing operative), logistics (transport and warehouse operations supervisor), agriculture and horticulture (countryside worker), and motor trades (vehicle damage paint technician)
- Developed our 16 to 18 programmes to include transferrable skills for 2024/25 in response to employer feedback
- Piloted a number of initiatives to embed sustainability into full-time students' schemes of work to give students the knowledge and skills required for green jobs and to become better global citizens in line with the government's sustainability and climate strategy for education.

Our activities continued to develop in 2025 to 2026, to include:

- Launching the National College for Logistics
- Expanding our Employer Partnership Scheme and expanded employer engagement activity, enabling over 1,300 students to benefit from direct industry interactions including placements, projects and employer-led experiences
- Strengthened employer-led curriculum development through the establishment of Industry Advisory Boards across key sectors, ensuring programmes remain aligned to regional and national skills needs
- Enhanced sustainability education and infrastructure, including the introduction of specialist green skills courses and investment in renewable energy training equipment such as hydrogen fuel cell technology.



Contribution to National, Regional and Local Priorities

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The table below sets out our key priorities and target outcomes relating to national, regional and local priorities for the academic year 2026/27:

Strategic Priority	LSIP Priority	Proposed Targets
Extend our market leadership, size and scale in the areas we serve	Expand provision in the Industrial Strategy 8 and in Health	Undertake a skills symposium in each of the IS8 plus Health to support curriculum planning. Expand work through the Growth Corridor and map curriculum offer to further enhance offer. Extend the 'Tresham Trailblazers' scheme to bring businesses and students together to develop entrepreneurial skills. Undertake learning schemes for 100 learners with Bedford Giving and the Northamptonshire Community Foundation to give students opportunity to explore work with the VCS. Work with NHS Trusts to ensure that all provision effectively maps to the NHS workforce plan.
Extend our market leadership, size and scale in the areas we serve Be recognised as a leader in further education	Expand work in the construction sector	Lead the National CTEC and ensure the project plans are effectively completed. Lead the Regional CTEC work plan. Establish Modern Methods of Construction work with partners through the Group's Modern Methods of Construction Centre.
Expand Technical and Professional Education and Higher Skills programmes	Grow Higher Level Skills	1000 students on Higher Level Skills programmes. Undertake a review of the Higher Level Skills portfolio. Expand Access to HE provision, linked to the Industrial Strategy+2 areas.
Be recognised as a leader in further education and a major source of civic leadership in our communities	Respond to the significant infrastructure developments in the Region.	Convene the skills group for Universal. Sign a strategic partnership with East West Rail. Play a significant role in the Big 50 Place Board. Complete the targets set out in the Skills Bedfordshire workplan. Establish plan for hospitality provision and the visitor economy in Bedfordshire. Convene the Ox-Cam Growth Corridor Skills Commission.

Contribution to National, Regional and Local Priorities

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Strategic Priority	LSIP Priority	Proposed Targets
Extend our market leadership, size and scale in the areas we serve Be recognised as a leader in further education	Respond to Post 16 transitions and NEET reduction	Work with the Careers Hub to develop post 16 transition standards to pilot activity. Develop SEMH provision in all local authorities. Develop an employer mentor scheme: target 20 employers to mentor disengaged and at risk of becoming NEET students. Introduce Chatty Cafe provision at both Bedford and Corby Learning Centre to remove barriers to education for 19 to 24 NEETS.
Provide a better, more comprehensive service to employers	Engage with businesses, developing clear pathways and routes - Clarity - SMEs - Rural Careers Service and Growth Hubs	Develop an employer skills academy. Establish an employer hub in Bedford. Develop an employer event with the JCP in Bedfordshire to mirror activity in Northamptonshire. Run an employer event for SMEs in Northamptonshire. Develop in partnership an adult education curriculum that addresses both current and future skills priorities providing clear pathways to skilled jobs including SWAP like/Bootcamp provision. Run events with both chambers in the Region.
Achieve consistent high levels of education	Develop literacy, digital and numeracy skills.	Take a leading role in the North Northamptonshire literary festival. The Group's Sixth Forms to undertake reading exchanges with local schools. Continue to map the entirety of the curriculum to the essential skills needed for employment. Roll out a pilot on oracy conducted in 25/26 to the whole College Group.

Local Needs Duty Self- Assessment

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TBCG has achieved the Expected Standard in meeting skills need and is making rapid progress through significant Regional leadership to achieving a strong standard.

The Group knows this because it has been through an extensive self assessment process, reflecting on its current work, and enhancing its plans and planning processes. These have been peer reviewed and mapped to priority sectors. We will continue to meet the needs of students by preparing them to meet their aspirational destinations, so that they can progress on to successful careers that support national, regional and local priorities and the economy. Some students will achieve this directly from college whilst others, who require higher technical skills, will achieve this once a degree or further training has been completed.

Leaders engage effectively with employers and other stakeholders in curriculum design. This continues to ensure breadth of opportunity and work readiness of students, as well as to ensure we are meeting employer demands and the skills needs of the communities the Group serves.

The Group's Work Experience Policy will continue to be the key driver in preparing students to have the knowledge, skills and behaviours to meet the needs of local, regional and national employers.

Employer engagement will continue to be strong when supporting students to identify career opportunities and support their aspirations to achieve positive destinations. The recently reviewed Adults Skills Strategy integrates a culture of careers not courses across our local communities to ensure adults are equipped for employment at every opportunity to meet place specific technical and higher skills demands. Courses will be delivered on site, campus based, at our Learning Centres and through distance learning. This will ensure an agile delivery model is available to meet the needs of our communities. The revised Strategy puts greater emphasis in developing provision in more Subject Sector Areas (SSAs) to help more people in their development. A prime example of this has been the development of the National College for Logistics. The Group will continue to focus on courses for inactive adults with prior attainment below Level 2 to prepare adults with the skills needed to fill workforce gaps both locally and at a national level.

The work on Post-16 transitions that the Group undertook to build greater links with schools, local authorities and other providers is ensuring that the College is responding to the NEET challenge and supporting more young people with barriers to enter post-16 education.

All of this is underpinned by an ambitious Curriculum Strategy which is the basis of an annual curriculum planning and review process, which, given the Group's growth demonstrates the group's commitment to continue to meet need for individuals and communities.

Corporation Statement

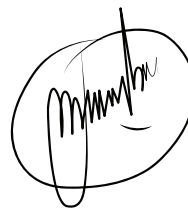
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On behalf of The Bedford College Group corporation, it is hereby confirmed that the accountability statement as set out above reflects an agreed statement of purpose, aims and objectives as approved by the corporation at their meeting on 8th July 2026.

The plan will be published on the Group's website within three months of the start of the new academic year and can be accessed from the following link: [Accountability Statement](#)



Alasdair Simmons
Chair of Governors



Yiannis Koursis OBE
Chief Executive Officer

Annual financial statements: [Annual Financial statements | The Bedford College Group](#)

Local Skills Improvement Plan (South East Midlands): [LSIP \(Parts 1 and 2\) 31 July 2023 \(002\).pdf \(northants-chamber.co.uk\)](#)

Ofsted inspection report: [Ofsted | The Bedford College Group | Good](#)

Strategic plan: [Strategic Plan | The Bedford College Group](#)

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The Bedford College Group
Bedford College (registered office)
Cauldwell Street
Bedford MK42 9AH

01234 291000
bedfordcollegegroup.ac.uk

