

# External Board Review

*Capel Manor College*

Reviewer: *Rachel Nicol*  
*July 2023*

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# Executive Summary

This AoC External Board Review is based on the ETF/AoC pilot review framework. The Framework considers, but is not limited to, principles from Codes of Governance, the Education Inspection Framework and the DfE's current guidance on external board reviews. In discussion with you it was agreed to tailor the focus on triangulation of information, assurance, board engagement and participation and the strategic planning process.

The full report sets out the findings made against the 3 Board dimensions in the Framework with the key evidence that informs those findings.

The following table summarises the headline strengths and areas for development, also included in the relevant sections:

	STRENGTH	AREA FOR DEVELOPMENT
<b>BOARD COMPOSITION</b>	Strong current skills mix covering key areas, community & industry links	To utilise all skills and expand capacity of the Board for strategic development, considering support of an external facilitator to support the Board in strategic planning, objective setting and plans for oversight
<b>BOARD STUCTURE</b>	Effective committee structure with clear schemes of delegation through terms of reference, regularly reviewed	Review mechanisms for strategic planning: -Develop a timetable with priorities for review -Determination of nature of any strategy / steering committee
	Clear monitoring of matters arising and agreed actions in systematic way	Development of a board dashboard with agreed KPIs, targets and milestones

		articulated with a clear rationale. Agreement on how these are to be monitored by committees and the Board
		Work planning, agenda setting and cover sheets to be developed to support greater scrutiny at board level of strategic discussions, risk management, financial position and dashboard as well as ensuring triangulation of information.
<b>INTERACTION</b>	Strong culture of support, emotionally intelligent governors who are passionate about the College	Board to receive assurance on contingency planning and succession planning for key members of the leadership team, in particular quality and to establish a plan in terms of designated senior post-holders
	Positive and articulated commitment to the Nolan Principles	Agree a board engagement protocol and monitor activity to support clarity of functions between governance/ management and expectations and develop relationships for challenge

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## Fig 1

The overall conclusion on Board effectiveness is that :

**There is evidence the Board is proficient and has some impact on college strategy, effectiveness, and outcomes**

Thanks and appreciation is recorded to all those who have engaged in this Review. Particular thanks to the Governance Professional who has worked to ensure that arrangements have been smooth and efficient.

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# Our Approach

This External Board Review was undertaken by Rachel Nicol over the period April 1 2023 to 31 July 2023. The methodology followed a seven stage approach:



**Fig. 2**

Rachel Nicol (RN) met Roger McClure (Board Chair), Peter Brammall (Principal and CEO) and Joanne Coffey (Governance Professional) for an initial planning and scoping meeting on 10 May 2023. At that meeting it was agreed that the focus for the review would be:

***Information flow, triangulation and assurance between SLT and Board and committees and the Board***

***Board engagement and participation, inclusivity, contribution and balance.***

***Structure and meeting frequency reflecting on purpose, efficiency and oversight.***

***Format of strategic planning, role of strategy committee***

An online survey was issued to all Board members and completed between 15 May and 5 June. The survey produced a return rate of 83%.

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A desk top review of key college documentation informed one to one interviews with 5 governors and the governance professional which took place between Monday 19 June and Thursday 22 June 2023.

The Reviewer attended the College's Board meeting on 12 July 2023 at the College's Regents Park campus. The Reviewer also attended the following committee meetings:

Search & Governance meeting 07.06.23 (online recording)

Audit Committee 15.06.23 online

Academic Committee 20.06.23 online

Finance and Resources 21.06.23 online

Following moderation a draft report was shared with Joanne Coffey on 14 August 2023. This report takes into account feedback received by email on 15 August 2023 and from a meeting with the Roger McClure (Chair) on 20 September 2023. *An action plan is set out Appendix A.*

The remainder of this report is structured to set out key messages across the Review including dimensions of Board Composition, Structures and Interaction before concluding with a conclusion on overall effectiveness.

## **Background**

Capel Manor College is a specialist land based, environmental training provider with 6 campuses across greater London. In 2021-2022 data from the Self-Assessment report ("SAR") provides the College supported 3398 distinct learners (3466 enrolments across a range of provision: 16-18, apprenticeships and adult learners. The financial statements for 2021-2022 references enrolments of over 3176 learners with an overall achievement rate for all learners of 75.3%. Both the SAR and financial statements detail 24.5% students with declared disabilities, 19.7% with SEN including 207 High Needs students, 32.7% of student cohort from ethnic minority communities. At the time of inspection in May 2023 the Governance Professional has confirmed that the College had 2596 learners (which equates to 5064 enrolments).

The Curriculum planning paper presented to the Academic Committee in June 2023 confirms the qualification provision is predominantly vocational courses (with Maths and English provision from 2022-2023 delivered at GCSE level only). There are just under 300 students on work-based learning and circa 70 students on HE. More than two thirds of full and part time students study at level 2 or below. Land based T levels are being introduced in 2024 with the defunding of equivalent L3 courses being monitored.

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Reports and conversations at committee meetings and at the Board were open in terms of declining student numbers and actions being taken. The forecasting presented to the Academic Committee was confirmed to have now been “revised for accuracy and to take account of demographics”. Forecasting predicts an increase in numbers in nearly all areas over the next few years.

The Board should, during the strategic review, seek to further understand the reasons for declining numbers, the rationale for forecasting and test the assumptions which have led to the principles set out in curriculum planning. The leadership team have cited plans to “increase”, “steadily increase” or “maintain” numbers in different areas of the curriculum. These determinations relate to the overall strategic direction and should be picked up in wider board discussions to explore the market intelligence supporting them, strategic options and ensure the robustness of targets set.

### **Extract from the SAR 2021-2022 below on locations and provision:**

In 2021-22, this included provision at six campuses in Greater London:

- Enfield (North)
- Brooks Farm (North East)
- Gunnersbury Park (West)
- Regents Park (Central)
- Crystal Palace (South)
- Mottingham (South)

There are six academic areas within the College provision:

- Apprenticeships and Business Development
- The Princess Royal College of Animal Management and Saddlery
- The School of Arboriculture, Agriculture and Environmental Conservation
- The School of Floristry and Event Styling
- The School of Foundation Learning
- The School of Horticulture, Landscaping and Garden Design



### **Financial position**

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The total income of the College in 2021-2022 was £18,002,000 (excluding subsidiary companies). The annual report for 2021-2022 states that “The College has a history of strong financial performance, delivering an operating surplus year on year. This supports the continued delivery of specialist provision on a sustainable basis”:

The financial position of Capel Manor College is assessed under the ESFA criteria as good and this is confirmed in Finance & Resources Committee minutes June 2023 as in line with the College’s own views.

There are ongoing references to an operating surplus and it would be helpful to ascertain the Board’s understanding of the reconciliation of these references to the presentation of the financial statements in December 2022.

### **Strategic planning position**

The Strategic Plan within the Resources section on the electronic board portal sets out key objectives, values, mission and vision for a plan from 2022-2027. A series of measures are referenced next to objectives. It is understood from conversations that the Corporation postponed a strategy day planned for February 2023 and this is now scheduled to take place in September 2023. A report to the Corporation in September 2022 made reference to senior leadership team strategic planning days having taken place, with an intention to feed into Board discussions at the planned strategy day in February 2023.

A copy of a meeting pack for the Strategy Committee from 2021 was provided, the planned meeting in 2022 not being quorate and held for information. The Principal’s strategic overview report illustrates the potential level of strategic reporting available and could be reflected on in determining how to move forward with strategic oversight.

### **Senior leadership position**

There has been significant movement in key roles within the leadership team in recent years after the retirement of a Principal & CEO who had been in post for 30 years and a successor who then left in March 2022. An interim principal was then appointed internally from April 2022 remaining in post until December 2022. The current Principal & CEO joined the College in April 2023. There was also an interim arrangement for the Finance Director role from February 2022 before the current Deputy Principal, Finance and Resources was appointed, although the interim is being retained to oversee a key capital project to provide some continuity. The lead role for Quality is currently being managed under an interim arrangement which has been extended for a further year. Longer term arrangements are not yet clear.



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The Board, in particular the consistency in leadership from the Chair, has provided some stability during an unsettled period. The focus on recruitment to key positions and changes across the leadership team has inevitably impacted on the ability of the Board to make the progress it identified as required in July 2022.

The Chair confirmed that the Board undertook a detailed strategic planning exercise in 2020, considering numerous reports on the status of the College and proposals. Following the pandemic the Board's priority was to provide stability and support to the College in maintaining provision, stabilising the leadership team and ensuring appropriate board succession planning.

The Corporation has designated 2 senior post-holder positions, the Principal & CEO and the Governance professional. Appointments to other leadership positions is delegated to the Principal & CEO. The Board agreed at their meeting in July 2022 not to designate further senior post-holder positions, agreeing instead to monitor how the lead governor roles are implemented to better support the leadership team.

### **Ofsted position**

A full inspection was carried out in May 2023. The preliminary outcomes of the inspection were brought to the attention of the governors in committee meetings and a full copy of the draft report was included in the board pack for the July 12 2023 board meeting. It is understood that the publication of the report is likely to be delayed until the Autumn term.

The draft report presented to the Corporation in July 2023 indicated an overall effectiveness grade of "Requires Improvement". The sense of narrative from the leadership team at committee meetings was that the Ofsted findings were in line with expectations set out in the SAR and that the College is "self-aware". The Board should note that there are two areas (Behaviours & attitudes and High Needs provision) where the SAR for 2021-2022 and external validation assessed the position as good and where Ofsted graded them as requires improvement. In the written draft report it states that "since the last inspection leaders and those responsible for governance have not ensured that the quality of provision remains high"

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# Board Composition

## Current position and skills

The constitution of Capel Manor College (Instrument & Articles and Standing Orders) allows for a board of up to 22 members (circa Principal/CEO, 1 staff, 3 students and 17 external members) The College (from website review on 20.05.23) had 14 active external governors, with 9 of those having commenced after 2020, and one independent member (co-opted member of the Audit Committee). Profiles of governors, individual conversations and observations at meetings identified a broad range of skills present including analytical skills, finance, educational, industry specialist, legal and risk management.

Given the inherent challenges in using skills matrices the matrix adopted is robust and seeks to assess both the breadth and depth of skills across the Board (see minutes of Search & Governance meeting February 2023)

Two further governors (which would take the number to 16) have currently been granted leave of absence under agreed protocols. From profiles on the website one has a strong financial background as well as significant education experience and the other has significant FE experience. Return dates have been agreed for the upcoming academic year which will ensure composite skill levels are increased.

Of the 15 governors (excluding the CEO) responding to the survey circulated, 9 were between the ages of 55 and 74 with 5 being over 65. There was a broadly even split of male and female respondents, and the overall gender split on the board is now 50-50. 86.67% of respondents declared they were white/ white British and circa 13% declared a disability.

Progress in developing a more diverse board is diligently reflected on and noted at Search & Governance (in depth analysis of profile against sector data where known and against staff and student profile in papers to Search & Governance in February 2023). However, with a student population 32.7% ethnic minority the Board continues to face challenges in this area. A decision was taken not to collect socio economic data in the absence of comparative data.

Recruitment of a diverse board is an inherent challenge in the sector and one the Board continually seeks to address. Where the Board considers there may be voices missing it can look at mechanisms to ensure the focus on these voices is reflected across the structure, for example through scrutiny of data. The SLT can support this by highlighting patterns and trends in report headlines. The Audit Committee is planning to receive a

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report from the internal EDI Committee but this has been delayed pending recruitment of a link governor for EDI. On receipt of this report consideration can be given to what data and at what intervals might be appropriate for the Board to receive.

Governors receive the same unconscious bias training as staff.

The Chair was commended in governor conversations on the diligence and hard work applied in replenishing the Board and recognition of the need now to build the Board as a team.

### **Staff and student voice**

The rationale given for only having one staff governor was so that places on the board would be available for external skills. Although this is not an unusual position, given the overall size of the board is large and 2 governors have been granted leave there may be value in revisiting this position. The Finance & Resources Committee in June received a summary of results from the staff survey highlighting significant concerns on staff satisfaction and action plan. Questions at the Finance & Resources Committee on 21.06.23 picked up on the need for increased staff and student voice in estate and curriculum planning in particular. At the Academic Committee on 20.06.23 there was relevant questioning around the relationship between staff development and progress in quality.

The staff governor present at a number of meetings provided strong insight, helping to triangulate information for the board between quality standards and staffing. ***Given a new staff governor will join in the next academic year the Board could look at a number of options to increase staff and student voice including; increasing participation to 2 staff governors (but with the need to balance with the wider skills need), greater oversight of the output of staff council with support from the new staff governor through agreed reporting, increased articulation of the People/HR strategy and plan for monitoring, student participation in Finance & Resources Committee***

**It has been confirmed that once the council is established in September 2023 additional participation will be considered.**

The provision for 3 student governors and rotational attendance does appear to have enabled direct access to student voice at a governance level.

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## Recruitment, induction and development of governors

Policies are in place for the recruitment and development of governors, considered and approved by the Search & Governance Committee. The meeting of the Search & Governance Committee on 7 June 2023 evidenced robust discussion on the merits of pending applications with the confidence to reflect needs identified in the skills matrix and declined an application not to be considered to meet the current demands.

Recruitment should be supported by rigorous induction and development tailored to individuals (26.67% of survey respondents disagreed that they had had a good induction process with no correlation to joining date and another 33.3% only somewhat agreed they had had a good induction). Of the 15 governors surveyed 13.33% disagreed they had training and development enabling them to be more effective with 40% only somewhat agreeing.

Comments in the survey however evidenced strong communication facilitated by the Governance Professional and good access to information with activities such as learning walks and participation in groups allowing governors a better understanding of the College. The Governance Professional has also previously surveyed governors on areas of training required and confirmed in November 2022 that plans for future training had taken views into account.

It is difficult to provide appropriate training to meet the needs of all governors and to fit with their individual availability. Governors need to be proactive in consulting with the Governance Professional where they consider they are not being offered the required induction or training to support their effectiveness. It is noted that there has been low take up of external courses. Training can be delivered by members of the senior leadership team where appropriate but with regard to duplication and impact on workload.

***It would be helpful for the Search & Governance Committee to work with the Governance Professional on a list of potential activities and then consult with the wider board on expectations around induction and development, how this can be supported by the management team and managed with sensitivity to work loads of governors and staff to prioritise key activities for maximum impact.***

It is understood that the review of the induction process will be reviewed in collaboration with the Chair Designate.

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## Succession planning

The Board engages in comprehensive succession planning supported by the Governance professional, in particular for the role of Chair from August 2024, having pursued recruitment externally using a specialist agency. The process concluded in the appointment of both a strong Chair designate and an additional external governor.

Succession planning is clearly articulated in the Governance Professional's report in June 2023 to the Search & Governance Committee and uncertainty in succession to the role of Chair of the Finance & Resources Committee, identified at the time of review, has been resolved.

Post the report it was confirmed that the Chair of Finance and Resources has agreed to remain until December 2024 which will provide some consistency and support in upskilling potential successors.

The potential over reliance on a number of individuals in multiple roles across different committees, in particular membership of both academic and finance & resources, could leave the Board vulnerable in the medium to long term. ***Consideration should be given to developing chairing skills in other governors. Consideration should also be given to provision for recruitment of additional financial skills to enhance the Finance & Resources Committee and ensure robust succession options.***

The Board has agreed an extension for exceptional circumstances, assessed on skills need, for the Vice Chair. Whilst the rationale for a short-term extension is sound ***the reviewer would suggest a review of the policy to shorten the length of extensions for exceptional circumstances, to articulate the considerations and process for an annual review and allow for a balance between consistency and the continued refreshment of skills in a changeable environment***

Given the challenges in respect of staffing evidenced in the survey, there was some lack of clarity in governor conversations on the current status of the action plan/ people strategy to address issues and also as to where the skills lay on the Board to support challenge in this area. It is understood that a governor with HR experience has recently left the board and consideration should be given to whether this skill area is adequately covered in the board composition.

## Utilisation of skills across the structure

The strong skills composition of the Board of Capel Manor College has been distributed effectively across the committee structure. For example the Audit Committee in June

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demonstrated good knowledge of risk management and made appropriate suggestions on the adaptation required on the risk register for more effective governance. This included the need for some simplification and rag rating of risks for visibility and need for sharing of information across the structure. The Finance & Resources Committee evidenced good questioning around resourcing, initiatives and the relationship with the marketing budget. Current financial skills could be used to greater effect still with some sector bespoke training on FE funding and the accounting practices of the College. This would generate greater scrutiny on the relationship between the financial statements position, cash flow, pension adjustments and capital grants.

Strong industry and inspection knowledge supported the Academic Committee with evidence that governors are aware of information outside the College and the College's visibility with stakeholders. There was also clear knowledge of the potential impact of staff utilization and workload. Development of the post Ofsted action plan and simplification of the college improvement plan will support the Committee further in being able to scrutinise activity and impact.

## **Conclusions**

The governors of Capel are energetic and passionate about the mission of the College, and the students.

There is strong evidence of individual skills in required areas and a strong complement of governors from leadership positions and with educational or financial experience, including ex principals. Refreshment of membership in the last few years, and in particular the Chair's support of this process was commended in the survey and in governor conversations. Consideration should be given to clarifying the financial skills for short, medium and long term succession planning purposes and how HR skills on the Board can be recruited to or developed to enable the Board to scrutinise and challenge this aspect of the strategy.

Individual skills and experience have been deployed in a number of ways outside the governance structure, including on internal working groups on enrolment and attendance. Governors in conversations provided assurance on understanding the governance / operation line and on the benefits of participation in these activities and articulated progress made in key areas. However, only two thirds of those responding to the survey believed the Board is working strategically, using skills effectively in decision making or working well with the Principal & Senior Leadership team

The current challenges faced by the College in terms of declining 16-18 student numbers, pressure on funding, investment required in the capital estate and in quality to

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improve the outcomes for students, as well as staff satisfaction mean the Board needs to work with some urgency and with the management team to ensure skills are deployed across the governance framework to facilitate strategic planning as well as to fulfill the assurance and oversight function.

***The Board should now work collectively and with the Governance professional, Chair, CEO and wider management team to develop capacity for strategic planning, objective setting and monitoring and quality oversight.***

***Consideration could be given to recruitment of an individual with a strong background in strategic development, perhaps outside of education, but in the shorter term the Board should consider an external facilitator for the next strategic planning session to help in the development of a strategic planning timeline, priorities and areas of focus***

The following table summarises headlines:

BOARD COMPOSITION	
STRENGTH	AREA FOR DEVELOPMENT
1. Strong current skills mix covering key areas, community & industry links	1. To expand capacity for strategic development or use external facilitator to support board in strategic planning, objective setting and plans for oversight
2. Effective chair and committee chairs supporting efficient meetings	2. Revisit succession plan and consider financial and HR skills requirements
	3. Develop induction and training checklist, menu of activities and engage governors and leadership to support delivery

**Fig. 3**



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# Board Structures

## Background

Capel Manor College operates a committee-based structure including Finance & Resources, Academic, Search & Governance, Audit, Estates and a Strategy Committee. Committees (except the Strategy Committee) and the Board meet once a term. The Board also holds a strategy day with the next day planned for September 2023 following a postponement. Governors in conversations had mixed views on the appropriateness of the delay, although acknowledged the rationale in waiting for Principal succession to be settled. It is important now that the day planned for September impacts on strategic planning.

## Governance Codes

Committee papers for Search & Governance and the internal audit on governance considered at the March 2023 Audit Committee meeting reflected on compliance with the AoC Code of Good Governance. That audit provided assurance to the Board of compliance with the AoC Code's 53 areas with a recommendation to review the governance framework in terms of frequency of meetings and impact.

The financial statements for the year ended 31 July 2023 confirm the AoC Code was adopted by the Corporation in 2017. The financial statements however also make reference to compliance with the Foundation Code (this has been replaced) and to drawing from best practice and considering aspects of the UK Corporate Governance Code in so far as they are relevant to the sector. The financial statements confirm the governors opinion that the College complies with all provisions of the Code (the Code being defined as the UKCGC. ***The reviewer has only seen consideration of assurance against the AoC Code of Good governance and believes this is the adopted position so wording in the accounts should be clarified for accuracy.***

## Model adopted

It is understood the Board has previously debated the merits of the committee model compared with a model with "Carveresque model" with less committees and more full board meetings. The Board concluded on retention of a committee model.

A 2 page governance statement succinctly sets out primary points on the structure and expectations on training, induction and information sources.

The internal audit on governance carried out in January 2023 recommended an in depth review on the effectiveness of the Governance framework, including amongst other



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things the frequency of meetings. The report is premised on an underlying assumption by the auditors that more in person meetings is both best practice and leads to more collegiate relationships. This has to be balanced with work load of governors and focus of meetings to ensure best use of time. Whilst there has been some concern as to whether meetings are frequent enough, governor conversations focused on the timeliness and focus of information to the Board rather than indicating additional meetings are required. This supports the internal survey carried out by the Governance Professional in 2022 (available on the portal) where 10/11 governors responding confirmed the number of board meetings (4-5) as ideal.

Terms of reference are articulated for the different committees and were reviewed during the summer cycle of meetings, in particular to update them for the ONS reclassification decision. The skills audit and succession planning has allowed appropriate skills distribution across the structure, subject to the earlier comment on some individuals undertaking multiple roles which may place a burden on them in terms of workload. The chairing of the Finance & Resources committee is to be resolved and consideration should be given to further informal links between governors to encourage those new to the structure to develop experience.

***The Chair of the Corporation also acts as the Chair of the Governance Committee. There is no regulation or guidance in the sector preventing this. However, given the remit of this committee is wider than the search function, and looks at matters such as self-assessment and the governance structure, there is an argument for consideration of greater independence. This would allow the committee to periodically independently reflect on the operation of the structure and for the Chair to be better positioned to reflect on how the structure is serving the College.***

Whilst an appropriate process was followed in discussing models of governance, it is not clear that the underlying issues leading individuals to prefer one model or the other have been as robustly considered as they might have been to allow for the conclusion to be collectively owned and fully supported. Underlying issues included perceived historic weaknesses in senior management, historic gaps in management accounts reporting, lack of data on student experience and quality and risk of silo working. These areas have been flagged, either in the Ofsted inspection, references to “disappointing outcomes” in a number of management reports and in the financial position moving to a deficit.

***Although work on a number of these issues has commenced, eg. through development of the management team, the Ofsted outcomes suggest careful consideration on how to further evolve them if needed. The reviewer is not advocating for a change of structure. Indeed, the committee structure has***

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***allowed for delegation of work and distribution of governor skills to good effect. a transparent and open conversation on how the agreed structure can adapt to meet these challenges.***

## **Strategy Committee and strategic oversight**

One area agreed for specific review in the scoping meeting is the operation of the Strategy Committee. Terms of reference for this committee are included on the portal and noted to have been approved by email in July 2021. The role of the Committee was raised during the internal audit on governance and highlighted for review.

Governor conversations and observation of the Search & Governance Committee identified different opinions of governors both on the role of the Committee and with some governors not having any knowledge of its function. The internal evaluation in 2022 confirmed only 4 out of 11 responding had attended the committee in any form (participant or observer). It is however recognised that there has been significant turnover in board membership since the detailed strategic planning work in 2020 and not all governors had knowledge of the work of the committee or the intention.

There was an absolute consensus that strategy setting is the role of the full Board with differences centering around the extent of delegation of oversight of the achievement of objectives. The issue was referenced in the June meeting of the Search & Governance Committee with suggestions being that the role should be to review KPIs (the Chair has confirmed this was historically part of the role), determine if strategy is on track and to do preparatory work in advance of the strategy day. The terms of reference as drafted are broad and the relationship between committees on strategy is not well articulated. Membership of the strategy committee is narrow and based on current chairs. There are no meeting packs for the Strategy Committee on Decision Time so it is not clear when they last met or what was considered.

The College has recognised the need to develop particular areas of the strategic plan, for example stakeholder engagement. Other areas have been flagged up in committee meetings and included in this report within the review of triangulation. ***The Board should ensure it includes strong community governors, as well as those with diverse backgrounds or with connections in communities, in developing the strategic plan and articulating planned board oversight of the stakeholder engagement strategy. This will engage more governors, widen participation and increase impact.***

It should be for the full board to determine how they fulfil their role in respect of strategy development. There is recognition that there are some fundamental challenges that may

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necessitate changes in strategy. Having worked hard to recruit and develop a board with a strong collective skillset, particularly in relevant industries and local communities, full consideration should be given to what expertise is required on each element of the strategy.

***The Chair, CEO and Governance Professional initially should look at drafting a strategic review timetable to prioritise different elements (a number of areas were highlighted by the Principal in his report on 12 July). That timetable should be presented to the full board for an open discussion in September, potentially with a facilitator, on how they feel they should and can contribute to the process. If there is a consensus for a strategy committee or steering group to exist, the terms of reference should be agreed by the whole board and a plan developed to ensure the whole Board is engaged.***

Intensive changes in the leadership team in a short timeframe and consequential changes in processes and reporting looks to have contributed to the Board being diverted from holistic involvement in strategic planning and oversight to have been enabled to properly assess and impact on the decline in quality of provision or reduction in student numbers. It may be that limiting delegation of key functions, at least in the short term, will allow for more effective building of the collective board.

### **Board assurance – key areas**

The Principal & CEO report on 12 July 2023 sets out an open summary of key challenges from the perspective of the SLT against principal risks. The transparency demonstrated in the reports of the current and previous interim principal (in particular the report in July 2022) provide confidence that governors and leadership can work together to address issues identified.

It is worth noting that the Academic Committee in June 2022 received a KPI table setting out the position for 2020-2021 on student numbers for different categories, achievement rate, retention rate and attendance. Whilst a review of papers after that date including a curriculum planning paper, the SAR, QIP paper and minutes provide a lot of percentages and data, these are largely within narrative reports and are likely to be difficult to readily reconcile for governors.

***Now that the leadership team have made progress with the pro monitor system for data management the Board and leadership team should collaborate on the dashboard design to ensure it:***

***-Covers key measures agreed as part of the strategic plan but then also breaks down targets (at the moment in the strategic plan there are a lot of “measures” for***

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*“satisfaction” at over 95%. There is a lot of data coming out of surveys so the Board needs to be clear how they expect the 95% to be measured. Student number targets should be considered and articulated. At the moment the strategic plan references increase year on year. A number of different student attendance targets appear in reports, 95% in the June 2022 KPI report, 85% in the March 2023 QIP)*

***-has a clear rationale on target setting, milestones and methodology for rag rating***

***-has a starting point for comparison to ensure governors can easily pick up trends and patterns***

***-Articulates KPIs to be monitored by each committee but also visible at each board meeting.***

***[Note – the Principal & CEO is bringing a revised dashboard to the September Strategy Day for discussion]***

### **Corporation workplan, agendas and minutes**

A clear timetable of meetings is set out in the July board pack and a work plan for the Board and committees is included in the Resources section on the electronic portal. There was support in governor conversations and in the survey responses to ensure time is given to key agenda items to allow for greater discussion.

***The work plan should now be reflected on to consider weighting areas for additional time, particularly at the board such as strategic planning, risk review and quality oversight. The review will also allow board members to explore opportunities for the triangulation of different sources of information*** such as internal audit reports and the risk register.

Board agendas are currently primarily structured around summaries of committee meeting discussions. The emphasis on minutes, length and frequency of minutes was raised in the internal audit. The minutes of the meetings observed provided succinct and accurate summaries of the discussions that took place and were well presented. It might be helpful for committees and or chairs to address any minor typographical errors in advance of meetings to both save time and to avoid over emphasis on administration. Governors did on numerous occasions praise the efficiency and skills of the Governance Professional.

The suite of minutes and the short presentations by chairs at the 12 July meeting provided a useful overview for governors and the meeting timings were managed effectively by the Chair. The Governance Professional is to be commended for turning round that volume of minutes in such a short space of time. ***Consideration could be given to short rag rated reports setting out the level of assurance taken by the***

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***committees on management actions to help the Board in focusing on critical areas.***

## **Risk management**

The Board has recognised the importance of risk management in terms of both operational and governance oversight and the Chair and CEO are collaborating to support this work.

The College has a Risk Management Policy, the most recent version on Decision Time relating to the 2021-2022 year. The Audit Committee received a paper in June 2023 setting out the review of the College's approach to ensure risk management is embedded at an operational level and that mitigations are better articulated and impacts understood. Reference was made in the Audit committee report to an updated simplified version of the principal risks schedule being presented at the full governing body meeting on 12 July. ***A new document "SLT overview of key challenges" was presented on 12 July with narrative against the principal risks. Governors have found the streamlined approach helpful for the purposes of strategic review but consideration now needs to be given to avoiding duplication of work and ensuring comprehensive oversight.***

It is not clear whether the Audit Committee has had any formal training on risk management. Observation of the Committee however identified a number of governors with strong skills in monitoring risks who also recognised the need for information to be presented so governors can have greater visibility of key risks.

There is a plan for an internal audit to be carried out on risk management in due course and a carefully scoped audit, carried out by risk management experts could support the College's development in this area. Although the risks of new initiatives are included in the register it is not clear how the decisions to exploit strategic opportunities are taken in the context of risk or at what stage they are brought to the Board.

There was some concern raised by governors on the presentation of the register on the electronic board portal but with advice given on downloading it.

***The Board should continue to work with the leadership team on the approach to and reporting of risk management and consider:***

***-One key risk register for presentation at Audit Committee and the full board with arrows showing risk movement and priorities with high level commentary in a narrative report. This will allow all governors to routinely consider risks.***

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***-Discussion on risk appetite and approach Board wishes to take in articulating this, revision the policy and linking to strategic objectives (cover reports could assist with this)***

***-Risk management training / development session***

## **Full board activity**

While committees are clear on decisions delegated to them and these are reported to the Board it would be worth carrying out a review of how some key areas might benefit from wider discussion at full board. For example, the Audit minutes included in the July board pack refer to a resolution that the Audit Committee was asked to discuss and agree the internal audit strategy. Input from the wider board could support the prioritisation of audits and allocation of resources to where there is the greatest need for assurance. A summary of the scrutiny of the budget position was provided by the Chair of Finance & Resources to the Board but wider participation to agree key budget principles would enhance the understanding of the full governing body and support strategic debate in due course.

A review of key items for more in depth discussion at full Board would now be timely. Although detailed scrutiny in committees is helpful and can be summarised, wider participation on a narrow range of key areas would enable more governors to be better informed and support strategy development. Not all governors spoken to in conversations felt they had an overall sense of strategy or priorities, although the accountability statement had more recently assisted in providing a summary overview.

***The Board should look at how, without creating duplication of papers, but with a view to holistic oversight, board discussions could include as a minimum, strategic reviews, key performance measures, budget papers, the internal audit strategy and risk register. This should be linked to the work plan.***

## **Relationships**

The Governance Professional demonstrated an effective relationship with the Chair and other committee chairs in managing the meeting cycle and with other governors and the management team. There is a clear schedule of actions considered at the outset of each meeting. There was some confusion at the July 12 board meeting regarding expectations on a report from the attendance group which was not included in the pack.

***Additional checking of the action schedule with chairs and the management team at the time of agenda setting and seeking clarification if needed will ensure the Board can evidence follow through of agreed actions.*** Assurance was provided by



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the governor who had attended the relevant operational group but this may not always be possible. However, in other cases where committees were expecting reports (eg, in Audit they were expecting a report from the EDI Committee), the matters arising schedules provided a clear audit trail on status and reason for delay which was extremely helpful.

It was evident that the Chair and the Governance professional have worked hard to facilitate productive relationships following the appointment of the Principal & CEO, the Chair having spent time with the Principal & CEO to set up clear expectations on governance.

## **Papers**

The College has recognised the need for improved reporting to the Board to assist in scrutiny. Report front sheets currently set out the purpose of each report, eg. whether an item is for decision or information. Most reports then provide background or introduction. Introducing further discipline in report writing to ensure authors provide expected context in terms of previous decisions, subsequent developments and action taken, as well as the current position, will support board scrutiny.

The evolution of the Principal & CEO's reports to the Board, even in the short timeframe observed, shows an awareness of issues and sensitivity to governance requirements that provided confidence. The report to the July 2023 meeting highlighted the plan to move to shorter reports, setting out key issues and enabling the Board to focus on significant matters. The report evidenced this through reference to risk, but more importantly to strategic opportunities, transparency of challenges and gave direction on key areas for discussion. The report highlighted the plans for improved reporting having discussed the same with the Chair and various members.

Governor conversations pointed to some repetition across papers, need for development, requirement for transparent and accurate information on actual position and difficulty with lengthy papers (the College Improvement plan was given as an example) in being able to challenge at a high level.

***Development of cover sheets to bring together areas identified as critical to collective oversight eg. relevant risk register reference and strategic objectives, intended impact, financial implications etc. would further develop consistency and discipline in reporting to allow governors easier access to the holistic position.***

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## Self-assessment

The Board carries out short governor surveys and most recently has questioned the length and frequency of meetings as well as asking high level questions in Autumn 2022 on overall effectiveness. Surveys have tended to focus on board operations rather than effectiveness and impact. An internal audit was also procured.

***Given the Board is self-aware, recognising its own position and that of the College, the Governance professional could now look to develop surveys to take account of board competencies and impact. This could look in 12 months to reflect on how the agreed action plan from this review and the post ofsted action plan have been implemented. The action plan can then be amended to take account of the findings.***

## Triangulation of information

Data on EDI in respect of College performance is available to the Board and committees through a number of reports, for example in the staff survey, the percentage of staff believing the College promotes EDI and in the narrative reports to the Quality Committee.

Key measures for EDI are currently articulated as “no statistically significant gaps for student / staff satisfaction between different groups” although the SAR for 2021-2022 in referenced “widening achievement gaps for gender, ethnicity and disability” Without further context as to what is considered statistically significant, particularly given the student profile, this is difficult for a board to consider and impact on actions required. The Board should be seeking to understand the full picture, when gaps become statistically valid, what the trends are showing and whether actions being taken are having an impact.

***The Board could look to enhance the reporting of performance data around EDI in terms of recruitment, student performance, attendance, staffing and disciplinaries to better draw out reflections on any relationships with protected characteristics or look at how the needs of the diverse communities are reflected on in the strategic planning process.***

At the Academic Committee in June 2023 there was no significant discussion around protected characteristics and patterns in the data. This may be because it is not considered to be problematic or significant by the management team but given the high numbers of students with declared needs (650) and that 32.7% of the student population are from minority ethnic groups, routine assurance on this should be built into reports for increased scrutiny. Where data was more clearly presented, for example



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on student disciplinaries, governors were able to raise appropriate questions on potential trends.

There are plans for the internal EDI Committee to report to the Audit Committee and that will provide the Committee with more information on the internal scrutiny so they can reflect on how different agreed EDI objectives are reflected in the risk register and overseen by the Board and various committees.

There is evidence that the leadership team are working closely together to triangulate information and collaborating on reporting between finance and quality in particular, but also with attendance of the HR lead at meetings. Whilst use of management time should be monitored, attendance by a spread of management at this stage in the development enabled the Academic Committee to bring together lines of questioning and make links e.g. between curriculum planning, staff development and lesson observations.

Further examples of where triangulation through the governance structure could support scrutiny are:

**High needs provision.** The area was graded requires improvement against an expectation of good (Academic Committee), the College works with 33 different agencies to recover costs for under 300 students resulting in debt management issues (Finance & Resources). ***The Board in exploring this strategy needs to bring together all the information on numbers, contribution, strategic fit, partnership and stakeholder management.***

**People strategy.** Staff satisfaction is low with 50% disagreeing they have an appropriate work life balance and 45% being negative about communication (Finance and Resources). The Chair did however report that staff morale was good pre Covid. Early information on the decision to have ungraded observations indicates this is a positive but this needs to be triangulated through further surveying planned and through use of benchmarking for context (no bench mark given for sick leave) There are some public sector comparatives available, which together with additional breakdowns in data such as between short term and long term sick, would assist the committee in terms of context.

Also reported to Finance & Resources is the mitigation of the current deficit position due to a high vacancy factor. This needs triangulating with the Academic Committee in terms of questioning around the impact on teacher workload and on the student experience. There was also reference in the March Audit minutes to a high risk on employee relations matters. Confidential reporting of such matters, even though verbal updates, to the Finance & Resources committee could provide governors with a better sense of issues faced would assist in development of the People Strategy.

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**Enrolment, conversion and 42 day leavers.** A verbal update on the position and initiatives was given at the Academic Committee and conversations happened at Finance & Resources on the investment in marketing and whether the impact on enrolment and conversion is measurable. Additional local market intelligence and trend data would assist in strategic conversations as well as monitoring at various committees. A comment was made on the tour regarding the potential usefulness of a heat map showing where students come from. A summary of this information, if the software allows it would be helpful to the Board as well as to internal teams in planning.

The Board fully understands they are balancing funding with the need to improve quality and invest in the student experience.

It may be helpful for the purpose of visualising triangulation to produce a simple map for governors on high risk areas to show where challenge might come from in different committees and what the Board would expect to see.

## Conclusions

The Review has identified that the Board Structure is broadly effective with clear terms of reference and delegation to committees with effective reporting of committee discussions to the Board. Further development should ensure full Board involvement in strategic planning and holistic oversight of activity. This will allow triangulation of issues and optimal use of governor skills. Other improvements around reporting, such as improved cover sheets and focused agendas will allow governor time and effort to impact where it is most needed.

The following table summarises headlines:

BOARD STRUCTURE	
STRENGTH	AREA FOR DEVELOPMENT
1. Effective committee structure with clear schemes of delegation through terms of reference, regularly reviewed	1. Board to review approach to strategic development to use all available knowledge and skills including: - Strategic planning timetable with priorities for review - Determination of nature of any strategy / steering committee
2. Progress made in developing shorter, more focused reports	2. Development of a board dashboard with agreed KPIs, targets and milestones articulated with a clear

	rationale. Agreement on how these are to be monitored by committees and the Board
3. Clear monitoring of matters arising and agreed actions in systematic way	3. Work planning and agenda setting to be developed to support greater scrutiny at board level of strategic discussions, risk management, financial position and dashboard as well as ensuring triangulation of information.
	4. Further development of cover sheets, papers and report writing guidance to ensure key information such as relevant strategic objective, risk, KPIs etc. are identified.

**Fig. 4**

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# Board Interaction

## Background

Capel College has procured an electronic board portal which is confirmed to have been in place since 2019 with access provided for the review from 2022 Board packs are easy to navigate and no governors in meetings observed seemed to have any difficulties in accessing papers. All governors can access papers for committees they are not on as they are made available to all members following each round of meetings.

Students are given the same access as external governors for the committees they are members of.

The Board in July 2022 determined that all full board meetings should take place in person, the only exception being for 2 individuals where appointments had been made of non-local governors based on skills. One of the 2 individuals attended in person and the other was on leave of absence.

## Culture

The culture of the Board witnessed during the review, both in online and at the meeting on 12 July 2023 was extremely positive. Governors engaged with a pre-meeting campus tour and were curious in asking questions about the college, the staff and students. Governors were respectful of each other and staff and there was a vibrant atmosphere with governors showing an interest in each other personally as well as in relation to the role. There was also some evidence of healthy professional differences of opinion which would benefit from more open dialogue, but with mutual respect of skill sets and contribution consistently cited.

Questioning at both the Board meeting and committee meetings observed demonstrated emotional intelligence, knowledge and sensitivity. Relevant questions were clearly identified during the review. ***The Board now needs to look for further opportunities to develop challenge and seek evidence to support the assurance provided, ie. where is the evidence coming from to support the forecast student numbers given the current year position, how realistic are the targets set and how can progress be measured.*** The Board should not be afraid to question whether strategic decisions previously taken are still appropriate for the College and attainable. ***This could be achieved through workshop activities supported by the leadership team to include “what if” scenario planning and sensitivity analysis on projections and models.***

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Student governor participation observed was low in the online meeting where they attended (Academic Committee). However, survey results, minutes and governor conversations supported strong student governor participation. ***Further opportunities to consider papers and look at where students may be encouraged to participate can be monitored***

## **Relationship with the Executive**

The Principal's report in July 2022, by the then Interim Principal, sets out an open assessment of potential weaknesses impacting college performance including top down management and budget processes, system, process and data weaknesses and a lack of investment in the College estate. The self-assessment survey on 2021-2022 showed a 74.6% positive response to how well the Board challenge the executive. This indicates that some governors believe the level of challenge can be improved.

The Board in 2022-2023 has engaged with a number of initiatives supported by the Governance Professional, Chair and management team to enhance interaction, both between board members and between the Board and the senior leadership team. These have included full board meetings taking place in person (committee meetings remain on line), a wider programme of link governors both for support functions and curriculum areas and learning walks.

The Board and the leadership team have recognised the need to be able to triangulate information received to drive forward together to tackle “culture, climate and processes”. Individual governors support the value of these activities to enhance their understanding of the College and in building relationships. ***A formalised board engagement protocol may help to manage the operational/governance line, support newer governors and members of the leadership team in establishing the different functions and ensuring the independence of the board to encourage challenge.***

The balance of activity does need to be monitored to ensure the Board can maintain appropriate collective strategic oversight and balance support and challenge. A clear dashboard of measures and papers to be discussed by the full board would help to ensure all governors have a high level view of the complete picture.

Attendance at various committee meetings and the board meeting on 12 July provided good evidence of purposeful interaction, bringing together the skillsets of individual members with co-operative and balanced questioning. Participation of governors in internal groups has assisted in relationship building with the leadership team. Some

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governors still need to meet the CEO and other members of the team but do feel supported and able to contact them when time allows.

The current VP Quality is noted to be interim. Whilst under the Board's current arrangements, the leads for quality and finance are not senior post holders, this may be an area to be discussed with the Principal. Although the Board agreed in July 2022 not to designate further posts, and to monitor the lead governor roles as links with the senior team, there was some support in governor conversations to review this following recent turnover. Whether or not there is a decision to designate further posts as senior post-holders the Board will want assurance that plans are in place to further progress and embed quality improvements at the senior leadership level. ***The Board should seek assurance on contingency and succession plans for the leadership team and to establish such plans where posts are designated as senior post-holders.***

### **Chair, CEO & Governance professional**

There was evidence that the Chair and CEO meet regularly and have, for example, worked together to develop the approach to risk management. The Chair and Governance Professional also work together to agree agendas and there was evidence of mutual respect and understanding for respective roles, in particular the support, administrative strength and networking ability of the governance professional.

Reference was made in survey responses to the Governance Professional and the Chair "planning purposeful and relational meetings" helping governor engagement and inclusion and the Board benefitting from strong leadership from "the Chair creating an open forum...allowing governors to have their own voice"

Formal and regular 3 way meetings between the CEO, Chair and Governance Professional do not currently take place but the Governance Professional has confirmed this will be looked at. Agendas follow a set work plan with committee chairs reporting the business discussed in their committees. Survey comments praised the efficiency of meetings and strength of communication.

Consideration should now be given to increasing dialogue between the CEO, Chair and governance professional to support a review of agendas and requirements for focus of papers to invite greater dialogue and challenge on agreed key areas as outlined in the structure section. ***With further planning on agendas and regular triumvirate dialogue, the Chair, CEO and Governance Professional can help in meetings to focus the Board on the identified areas.***

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The Governance professional at the current time does not attend senior leadership team meetings, although clearly has an effective relationship with members of the team as witnessed in interactions. ***There are mixed views on whether attendance is best use of time, or even whether it impacts on potential independence of the governance professional. However, direct attendance can give insight into challenges and priorities of the leadership team and help in facilitating the communication between the board and the leadership team. It strengthens the ability of the Board to triangulate information and manage priorities from a governance perspective.***

***Consideration should also be given to investing in the professional development of the Governance Professional, either in terms of formal qualifications or participation in the strategic leadership programme to support further development of networks for the sharing of best practice and support.***

The Chair acknowledges it is difficult, given the time commitment and volunteer nature of the role to meet individual governors for one to one meetings and to bring in diverse voices. There is however much support from other governors on the hard work of the Chair in developing the Board and driving succession planning at a board and leadership level. The Chair is personable and has benefitted from informal dialogue with a number of governors.

There was no evidence of formal one to one reviews of governors, although they individually self-assess against the skills matrix on an annual basis and the governance professional monitors attendance.

The Board sets attendance targets and clear expectations and monitors performance. In 2021-2022 attendance at board meetings was at 74% and relatively consistent with previous years (target 80%). Overall average attendance at committees in the same year was 88.2% above the target set of 75%. The attendance at the Academic Committee whilst only marginally below the target at 73% was markedly below that of other committees and in previous years had been at 100%.

If some of the meetings for the full board in previous years were online, the impact on attendance and engagement of moving meetings to in person should be monitored, but balanced with the benefits of in person attendance on the ability of the board to gel. Results of the board self-assessment on 2021-2022 confirmed 72.8% felt the board “gelled” and this may have supported the decision for in person meetings.

***Formal one to one meetings and governor appraisals, either with the Chair, a committee chair and / or the governance professional will support the board in***



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***managing governor participation, understand any patterns in attendance, allow early identification of any concerns and support succession planning.***

Whilst there is no evidence from the review of dissatisfaction with the Chair's performance and much support for how the role has supported the Board it is considered best practice in the sector to carry out a formal appraisal of the Chair, allowing governors and the leadership team to anonymously provide feedback.

***An agreed form of assessment of the Chair and of other governors regarding "the extent to which board members have met their remit and participated in the board and its committees" should be developed to develop an open culture of continuous review (AoC Code of Good Governance September 2021)***

### **Nolan principles and code**

One hundred percent of survey responses confirmed adherence to the Nolan Principles.

Transparency of governance arrangements at Capel College is evidenced through clear publication of documentation, minutes, governor information and the register of interest on the College website. The robust nature of the Register of Interests for both governors and the leadership team, and routine consideration of conflicts in meetings, allows the Board to demonstrate integrity with no evidence of undue bias.

Decisions are taken under clear schemes of delegation with inclusion of relevant parties taking into account relevant information. Provision is made for consultation with the full board on particular matters, even where formal sign off is designated as Chair's action (eg. the Mottingham agreement) ***Further clarity on remit and collective responsibility could be achieved by a clearer articulation of a policy for chair's action (eg. in what situations and with what consultation) with written resolutions being used for other relevant matters more appropriately determined collectively.***

A clear 2 page statement of governance, approved in December 2022 appears on the College website and governors adhere to a Code of Conduct (last approved in December 2022), both documents referring to the requirement to adhere to the Nolan principles of public life. Annual review of these documents at a Board meeting allows refreshment of commitment to the principles.



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## Conclusions

The Review has identified that board interaction is positive with a strong culture of sensitivity, skills and support. Clear expectations of governors are articulated, governors actively attend and engage and are committed to adhering to the Nolan principles.

The Board and leadership team benefit from mutual support and professional respect for each other. This provides a strong basis for further development of interaction to support the need to increase challenge and scrutiny in responding to the current challenges.

The following table summarises headlines:

BOARD INTERACTION	
STRENGTH	AREA FOR DEVELOPMENT
1. Strong culture of support, emotionally intelligent governors who are passionate about the College	1. Board to receive assurance on contingency planning and succession planning for key members of the leadership team, in particular quality and to establish a plan in terms of designated senior post-holders
2. Positive and articulated commitment to the Nolan Principles	2. Agree a board engagement protocol and monitor activity to support clarity of functions between governance/ management and expectations and develop relationships for challenge
3. Self-aware Board and leadership team with mutual desire to drive improvement in the interests to the students and staff	3. Establish regular 3 way engagement of CEO, Chair and GP, use work planning and agenda setting to bring key matters to full board and ensure time for discussion and monitor triangulation of information across the structure
4.	4. Introduce chair and governor appraisals to support increased 2

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	way dialogue and culture of development
5.	5. Consider tools for developing challenge and enhancing strategic discussion such as sensitivity analysis and what if scenario planning

**Fig. 5**

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# Overall Board Effectiveness

In assessing overall Board effectiveness we have focused on the core function of a Governing Body:

- setting and communicating the College educational character, strategy and goals;
- holding executive leaders to account for educational performance and quality of the College and performance of staff;
- exercising effective control to ensure that funds and assets are protected and legal obligations are met.

We have looked at the way in which you observe the Nolan Principles and your adopted Code of Governance and the extent to which the culture of the Board focusses on outcomes. Key Board outcomes are shown below:



**Fig. 6**

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## Summary

Capel College has communicated a clear mission on its website with evidence of agreed strategic objectives. Changes in the leadership team and inconsistent availability of data and reports has made the establishment and measurement of KPIs challenging.

The Board and leadership team have recognised the need for improved reporting and greater links between strategy setting and risk management. Development of reports, a dashboard and streamlined presentation of data with trends and priorities clearly visible will support better challenge and decision making.

The Board and the leadership team have recognised that a number of areas of strategy require review and the Board should now seek to develop a strategy planning timetable to prioritise areas and ensure all governors contribute relevant skills to different aspects.

Challenges in monitoring and ensuring quality in particular was noted by Ofsted, Development of a post Ofsted action plan and simplification of the College Improvement Plan and risk reporting will support improvement in this area.

The College has an ESFA financial grade of good. Governors without sector experience should receive training in the additional complexities in terms of significant capital grants, complex pension adjustments etc. in the sector to better equip them to reconcile information in the management accounts to the financial statements and triangulate information.

The Board of Capel College has a strong and balanced skills mix which is being used effectively across the committee structure. Expectations are clearly set out and governors are passionate about the College. There are processes for governor succession planning and recruitment. There are some succession issues to be resolved in terms of finance and HR skills

The structure in place uses skills effectively with detailed and intelligent discussion in committees. Further work to ensure all governors have a more complete picture of the college position will support improved scrutiny. It will also enable governors to use their skills more widely in strategy development. The Board has recognised the need to operate at a more strategic level and to develop risk management and external facilitation at a strategy day would support this.

The Board and leadership team benefit from mutual support and professional respect for each other. This provides a strong basis for further development of interaction to

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support the need to increase challenge and scrutiny in responding to the current challenges.

**There is evidence the Board is proficient and has some impact on college strategy, effectiveness, and outcomes.**

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# Recommendations and Action Plan

This Review has drawn a number of conclusions about the strengths of the College and suggested areas for development are set out in the report above. The review also includes in italics a number of additional suggested actions for consideration.

We make the following recommendations:

- *Full Board to agree strategic planning timetable and priority areas for review at the Strategy day. This will secure engagement and optimise use of skills. Facilitation of discussions will support the Board and leadership team in looking at agreed objectives with a new perspective*
- *CEO to work with Board and leadership team to agree a dashboard with high level KPIs, measures and targets. This will provide governors with a holistic view of performance while committees can agree KPIs to be monitored in more depth.*
- *Work plan and agendas to be reviewed to consider items which would benefit from more in depth scrutiny, require full board consideration. This will allow wider participation in key areas such as strategic planning and risk management and enable governors to make links, triangulate information and understand college performance*
- *Development of papers in terms of cover sheets, length and presentation will limit excessive information, ensure governors time is not wasted and that they can focus on relevant and high level information and challenge more easily in a timely way.*
- *Introduction of annual chair and governor reviews. This will allow more open 2 way dialogue enabling issues to be discussed more openly and succession planning and development needs to be readily identified.*
- *Receive assurance on formal succession and contingency planning arrangements for the leadership team and monitor the position (in particular the plans for leadership on Quality). This will facilitate planning to increase stability and ensure continuity of leadership.*

These recommendations have been discussed with *the Governance Professional and whether they are accepted – set out whether there is an agreed action plan and if so insert or describe what process is to take place for the Board to agree next steps. If an action plan is agreed use the following format. Ensure that the issue is clearly defined,*

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*that the intended outcome is measurable and avoid all actions falling to the same named lead.*

Issue	Action	Intended outcome	Named lead	Timescale
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				

**Fig. 7**