

External Board Review



MidKent College

Reviewer: *Rob Lawson OBE*
November 2025

Version	Approved by Board Reviewer	Date
Draft		
Draft for moderation	Rob Lawson	Nov 3
Draft post moderation/shared with college	Rob Lawson	Nov 5
Final	Rob Lawson	Nov 10

Executive Summary

The process set up for AoC External Board Review is based on statutory requirements set out in relevant Government legislation and as part of ESFA conditions of funding. AoC has developed and updated the framework following completion of the first round Reviews that was 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, Office for Students requirements and the DfE’s guidance on external board Reviews.

The objective of the Review is to identify the strengths of the organisation’s governance and where there are development needs, developing actions based on sector good practice, to bring about governance improvement.

An initial scoping meeting was held prior to commencement of the Review to outline the Review process and to identify any key areas of focus (see below). Reference is made to the outcomes of the most recent external Review and actions taken to address areas for development.

Emerging findings have been discussed throughout the Review in a developmental and inclusive approach that supports College improvement and seeks to share best practice.

The full report sets out the main findings made against the three Board dimensions in the Framework along with the key evidence that informs those findings. The following table summarises the headline strengths and areas for development:

DIMENSION	STRENGTHS	AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT
BOARD COMPOSITION	Excellent mix of skills and backgrounds; diversity; very effective chairs; challenge and scrutiny.	Attendance could be improved; skills audit could be updated after a governor leaves the Board; a governor stakeholder mapping exercise; recruitment of governor with legal background.
BOARD STRUCTURE	Documentation is clear and up to date; new approach to governor and Chair reviews has strengthened self assessment; governance section of the College website is excellent; triangulation is strong and committees are well run and effective.	More student interaction; the governor handbook needs development; an annual minute of reaffirmation of the Board to the Nolan Principles; cover sheets need an executive summary and ‘previously discussed at’ section.
BOARD INTERACTION	Induction and training; mature, transparent and constructive working relationship between Board and the executive team; good working relationship between Triumvirate.	Continued strategic development for Clerk; change title from Clerk to governance professional.

Fig 1

The governance section of the College's website is exemplary and is evidence of a transparent and open approach to governance. A wealth of key documentation is included within the area and minutes and documents are right up to date. The area is also easily accessible and easy to follow. Other colleges could learn from MidKent's approach.

The overall conclusion on MidKent Board's effectiveness is that there is strong evidence the Board is highly proficient and consistently impacts on College effectiveness and outcomes.

(See Page 28 for wider concluding judgement).

Thanks and appreciation are recorded to all those who have engaged in this Review. Particular thanks to Clerk Corine Burkin who has worked hard to ensure arrangements have been smooth and efficient.

Our Approach

This External Board Review was undertaken by Rob Lawson over the period July to November, 2025. The methodology followed a ten-stage approach:



Fig. 2

Summarise the process undertaken here against the 10 steps above.

The Review process used with the Board of MidKent College was as follows:

- An initial planning and scoping meeting was held on July 10 with Chair Peter Fleming, Principal and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Simon Cook, Clerk Corine Burkin and Briony Denvir from AoC, to agree the approach and set the timeframe for Review activities. It was agreed that the standard AoC framework would be applied to the Review.
- An online survey was issued to all Board members on Monday, September 15, with responses required by Friday, September 26. The survey produced a return rate of 100%, with 14 out of 14 governors completing the survey.
- A desktop review of selected Board and key College documentation was considered, with the Reviewer being given access to the College's Board Intelligence (BI) governance platform. Further documentation was provided by the Clerk. Documentation considered included governance policies, Instrument and Articles, Standing Orders, Code of Conduct, terms of references for committees and governor role descriptions. BI also gave access to a wide range of historic Board and committee minutes.
- The reviewer also considered the governance area of the College website.
- A series of face to face or on-line interviews took place with governors and members of the executive. These included: Chair Peter Fleming; Principal and CEO Simon Cook; Clerk Corine Burkin; Vice chair and Chair of RemCo Angela Woodhouse; Christina Hart, Executive Director of Student Experience;

Chris Hare, Deputy Chief Executive Officer and Executive Director Employers & Corporate Services; Alex Hindson, Chair of Group Risk and Audit (GR&A) committee; Andy Cole, Chair of the Quality, Learning and Teaching (QTL) committee; staff governors Lynn Snedden and Babs Jossi; former student governor Olu Omomehin and Allison Currie, Chair of Finance and Resources (F&R) committee. Twelve 1-2-1 meetings were held in total.

- The Reviewer attended the College’s Board meeting at the Maidstone Campus on Monday, October 13 (in-person). The Reviewer also observed recorded meetings of the following committees: Remuneration (October 2), QTL (September 30), Search and Governance (S&G) on September 25, GR&A (September 18).
- Following completion of the evidence gathering phase an initial findings meeting was held on Wednesday, October 29.
- A first draft of the report was sent for moderation on Monday, November 3.
- A moderated report was shared with the Chair, Principal and CEO, and Clerk on Friday, November 7.
- The final report, including proposed action plan, was presented to the Board on Monday, December 8.

The remainder of this report is structured to set out key messages across the following Review Dimensions and Board Outcomes:

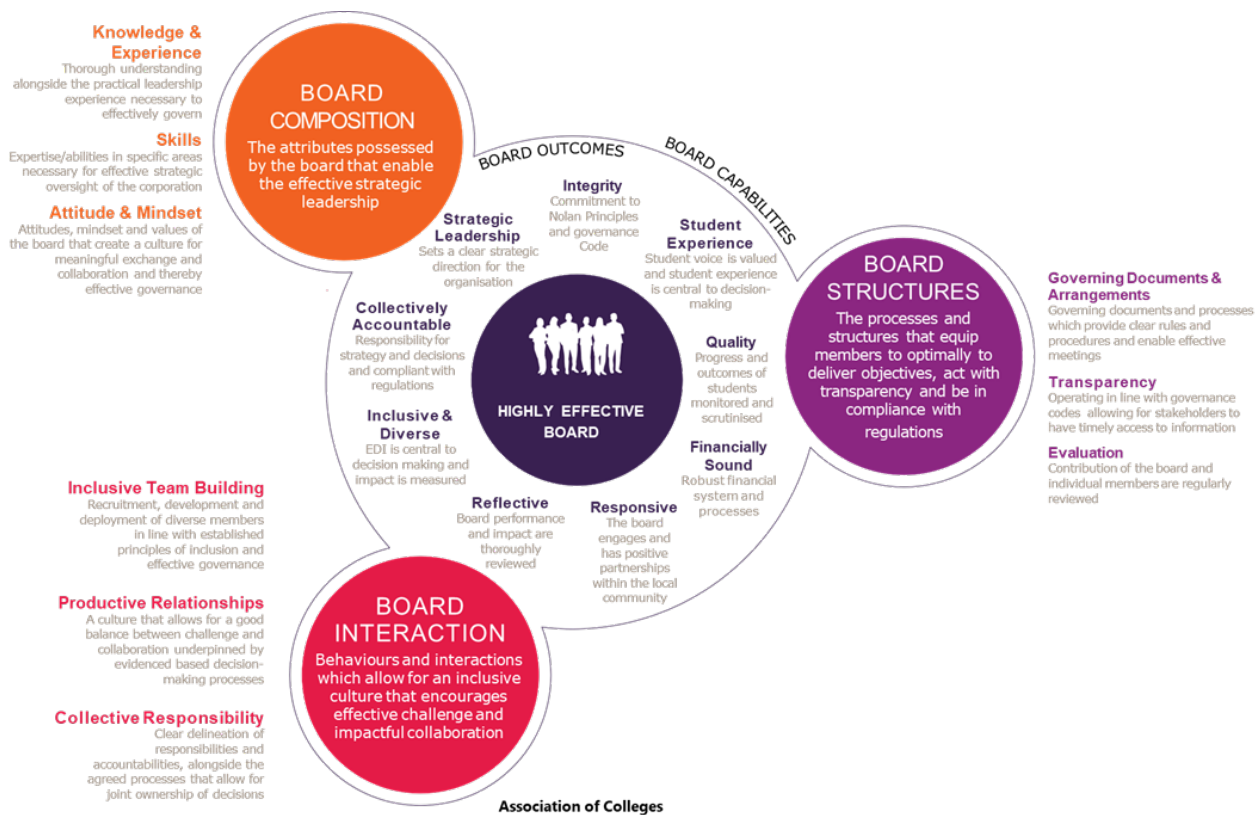


Fig. 3

Background to the organisation

MidKent College is a general Further Education College based in Kent with three campuses: Maidstone, Medway and Medway School of Art. An Ofsted report last October rated the College Good with Outstanding features – adult learning programmes and provision for learners with high needs.

The Ofsted report was complimentary about governance and governors at the College, stating: ***'Highly experienced and knowledgeable governors use their skills to help leaders provide high-quality education and training that serves the communities of MidKent well.'*** And: ***'Governors, leaders and staff work very closely and productively with a wide range of relevant stakeholders to understand and respond to skills needs highly effectively.'***

The College offers a large range of courses, from GCSE Maths and English resits and ESOL courses, a range of A-levels at the Maidstone Campus's Sixth Form Centre, to BTECs, Foundation Degrees and HNDs. The College delivers T-Levels in six subjects and also offers intermediate (Level 2), advanced (Level 3) and higher apprenticeships (Levels 4 to 7).

About 7,000 students attend MidKent – a mixture of young learners, adult learners and apprentices.

HE provision is relatively small, about 100 students, and is delivered through the universities of Greenwich and Kent and directly through Pearson.

The College's financial health is outstanding (as reported to the F&R committee on September 24: ***'The Group balance sheet remains strong with 66% staff costs as a percentage of turnover, high levels of cash reserves and the cash flow for the year shows an increase in group cash of £6m to a total of £47m. The financial health grading remains as Outstanding.'***)

MidKent College Group incorporates the FE College and MKC Training Services Ltd (MKCTS), a trading subsidiary which reports at Executive and Board level to the College. The Chair of MKCTS is a MKC board member which strengthens governance, though this is not mandated in the Instrument and Articles. MKCTS offers a variety of training and education services, primarily for construction, engineering, and health and safety industries, to both organisations and individuals – though primarily through a long-term contract with the Royal School of Military Engineering (RSME).

MidKent College's Principal and CEO has been in post since September 2016. He is supported by an experienced senior executive team – although the Executive Director of Estate and Finance is retiring next year.

Key local employers include Chartway Group, Phinia, BAE Systems, Jubilee Clips, Gallaghers and Baxall Construction.

The Board and executive team are currently developing a new strategic plan, but a ten-year strategic plan (2020-2030) identified seven priorities: Community, Education, Economy, Digital Transformation, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, Sustainability, and Workforce.

MidKent's last – and first – EBR was completed in February 2023 when the Reviewer listed 14 areas of development.

These areas of development were used to create an action plan of recommendations that has been regularly monitored by the S&G committee and then reported to Board. This action plan has been used in place of an annual governors' self-assessment report.

The Board adopted most, but not all of the recommendations. Any recommendations not adopted were subject to discussion and debate at S&G and Board meetings.

Board Composition

The attributes possessed by the Board that enable the effective strategic leadership

Background

Board composition refers to the attributes possessed by the Board that combine to enable effective strategic leadership. An evaluation of the Board's composition involved an analysis of the knowledge and experience of members that are essential for effective governance and strategic oversight, and the attitude and mindset that fosters independent thought and a commitment to the principles of good governance.

Findings

MidKent College has a Board of 16 governors, a co-opted governor, two staff governors and the Principal and CE.. Governors can serve up to a maximum of two four-year terms. The college's Standing Orders state:

Members shall serve a four-year term of office after which their membership will be reviewed by (S&G) in consultation with the member. It is good practice for members to serve no more than two terms of office unless there are exceptional circumstances. The S&G Committee will make recommendations to the Governing Body for their agreement.

No-one on the current Board has exceeded these guidelines. The Board includes two staff governors, two newly-appointed student governors (President and Vice President of the Student Union) and the Principal and CEO.

The Board has an excellent mix of skills and backgrounds, including: two former college principals; a former local government leader (the Chair); a professor and Pro Vice Chancellor at Canterbury Christ Church University; the Director General of the Institution of Civil Engineers; a qualified management accountant who was also a Group Director of Finance at Newcastle College Group; another qualified accountant; a senior leader in the construction industry; a risk and sustainability professional; an independent FE consultant and a former senior Ofsted inspector; a finance professional; a former investment fund manager; an HR director, and the Director of Strategy, Insight and Governance at Maidstone Borough Council.

This level of education, finance and senior leadership experience equips the Board with the necessary skills and confidence to challenge the executive team and scrutinise information supplied to them in Board and committee papers. It is unusual to find so much FE experience on a Board and ensures it has a thorough understanding of skills needs and the skills landscape at local and national level. The College uses this FE experience well – one of the two former college principals chairs the QTL committee while the former Group Director of Finance at Newcastle College Group chairs the F&R committee. The impact of their experience is clear to see at Board and committee meetings, with insightful, knowledgeable challenges to the executive team and Principal and Chief Executive. However, in meetings observed both of these Chairs delivered challenge in a mature, sensible way and avoided any temptation to get involved in operational matters, despite their backgrounds.

The Chairs of the other committees were equally effective, with the Chair of GR&A introducing new ways of examining risk – and according to members of his committee (through interviews and the survey) adding an extra level of professionalism to the scrutiny of risk.

In all of the meetings observed, chairs were skilled in summarising discussions, pulling together salient points and identifying actions needed. Meetings attended ran to the time allocated (two hours) even when specific items overran the time indicated in the agenda. Through interviews governors confirmed that meetings generally ran to time, and were shorter than in the past.

The impact of having so much senior financial experience is that there is the knowledge and experience to ask the right questions of the exec as well as the understanding of the college's (healthy) financial position and the wider context of finance in the FE sector, particularly the funding regime.

The Board Chair is an excellent communicator, chaired the Board meeting observed well and is popular among governors. "He has added vibrancy, urgency and vitality to the Board," said one governor in a 1-2-1 meeting. He was particularly adept at bringing different voices and perspectives into discussions and debates – as observed and as noted by several governors during 1-2-1 meetings. "He is very inclusive and he notes down who has contributed in meetings in order to ensure everyone's voices are heard at meetings. He will direct questions at people who haven't said much," reported one governor.

The number of governors at senior or director level also gives the necessary strategic experience needed to plan and monitor strategic plans and set strategic targets and KPIs. As evidenced through the 1-2-1 interviews, there is also a high level of self-reflection on the Board, with governors happy to express opinions on the strengths and weaknesses of the Board.

Two governors felt their professional contacts and networks could be used more by the College. It is recommended that the Board maps its professional networks and compares it to a map of the executive's networks to see if governors could do more in introducing the executive to new companies or stakeholders.

Through the survey, when asked if the board collaborates effectively with external stakeholders, including employers, six members strongly agreed, seven agreed and one was neutral. Some board members felt positively about the representation of local employers on the Board but noted that engagement with external stakeholders more broadly is limited. At the same time, Board members felt that they serve as ambassadors for the College, taking pride in their role and actively seeking opportunities to promote the College's work and foster collaboration.

Diversity

Diversity is a strength of the College Board. Of the 14 governors who completed the survey, seven were women, six were men and one preferred not to say. Three members of the Board are from Black/ African/ Caribbean/ Black British communities, while another governor was from a Mixed/multiple ethnic groups background, meaning 28 per cent of the Board are non-white. This compares with wider Kent's ethnic minorities making up about 11 per cent of the population (2021 Census), so the Board reflects the make-up of both the student and staff bodies.

The impact of this ethnic diversity should be to lead to better decision making through a wider range of perspectives and lived experiences.

Dr Priya Singh, Chair of the National Council for Voluntary Organisations' Chair in a recent paper on Board diversity said: "A board's approach to diversity sets the tone for the whole organisation. This in turn shapes how the people charities support are impacted.

"It's because of this that having a board with people of diverse backgrounds and life experiences is crucial.

"They are more likely to expose bias, provide richer discussions with well-rounded perspectives and help trustees with their decision-making, which in turn increases a charity's legitimacy and impact."

The Board also has a diversity of thought – as observed at Board and committee meetings and as reported through the 1-2-1 meetings. One governor said: "We have a very diverse Board in terms of backgrounds, skills, ethnicity and skills – there are so many different perspectives."

As reported in the S&G committee of September 25 and through the 1-2-1 meetings, a skills audit is collated twice a year, this target is also in the S&G committee's terms of reference, but new governors also complete a skills audit on joining the Board. Last year's annual report of the S&G committee stated the skills audit form had been updated to ensure it was fit for purpose by linking the skills to the College Strategic Priorities and I&As. Meanwhile, the GR&A committee uses the skills audit to identify any gaps or training needs (GR&A annual report, November 2024).

The most recent completed skills audit was part of the documentation sent to the Reviewer, and records the Board's skills very thoroughly. (The form was completed by all but one governor). Governors are asked to rank their knowledge/experience in a wide range of areas between 1-5. The skills audit confirmed the depth of knowledge and experience in areas such as education funding, risk management, financial strategy and management, quality assurance, performance management, strategic management and planning and strategic leadership. The Board has less experience in the areas of commercial acumen, marketing, IT and in particular law, which scored particularly poorly. The addition of a solicitor or someone from a law firm is recommended and was the subject of discussion at the September S&G committee. The right person could fill the legal skills gap as well as increasing the business acumen on the Board.

Some of the governors and members of the executive interviewed confirmed the skills audit was used effectively to recruit new governors.

While a biannual skills audit is good practice, as is every new governor completing a skills audit on joining, the skills audit should be updated whenever a governor steps down from the Board. This is a recommendation and will ensure the skills audit is always up to date.

Governors interviewed all expressed a commitment and loyalty to the College. They had a positive attitude to the College and expressed ambition for its students. Attendance is generally good, but could be improved. A report presented to the S&G committee of September 25 showed overall attendance at Board meetings for 2024/25 to be 83 per cent. Remco and S&G attendance was at 100 per cent for the same time period, though attendance at F&R committee was only 70 per cent. GR&A was at 83 per cent and QTL was at 86 per cent.

For comparison, the mean average attendance rate of 91 colleges for Board and committees combined in 2024/25 was 81.82 per cent, slightly down on the previous two years.

The College's Standing Orders state that the Chair will speak to governors after they have missed two consecutive meetings to see if they are able to continue as governors. In practice, the Clerk will speak to any governor missing two consecutive meetings, then the committee chair and then the Board Chair if a governor continues not to attend. A conversation at September's S&G committee concerned three governors whose attendance was giving cause for concern and the committee Chair agreed to speak to those involved.

Attendance was mentioned as an area of improvement by several governors during the 1-2-1 interviews. When asked about what improvements could be made on the Board, it was highlighted that a small number of governors struggle with capacity to attend meetings, which could be frustrating for others. Board meetings are in person while committee meetings are hybrid, with governors and members of the executive dialing in to meetings when it is more convenient.

The impact of non-attendance can be a lack of continuity and lack of knowledge at committee and Board meetings.

Governors interviewed did not have an issue with the days or timing of committee meetings, but it is recommended that an audit of optimum days/times is carried out to check to see if this is why attendance is an issue for a small minority of governors.

Conclusions

The Review has identified that the Board has an excellent mix of skills and backgrounds that empowers governors to scrutinise and challenge with knowledge and insight. The impressive diversity of the Board means it has a wide range of perspectives and approaches which further strengthens and informs the Board.

The Board and committee chairs are effective, driving meetings at pace but finding time to ensure inclusivity – the Board chair, for instance, makes notes of contributors throughout the meeting to ensure every voice is heard.

Attendance could be improved and it is recommended a College target of 80 per cent attendance at Board and committee meetings across an academic year be adopted, as is the case at many FE colleges.

The following table summarises headlines:

BOARD COMPOSITION	
STRENGTH	AREA FOR DEVELOPMENT
1. Excellent mix of skills and backgrounds.	1. Attendance could be improved and it is recommended that a target of 80 per cent attendance is set for all Board and committee meetings.
2. Diversity, in terms of ethnic backgrounds, gender and thought.	2. Skills audit could be updated after a governor leaves the Board.
3. Very effective chairs.	3. A governor stakeholder mapping exercise is recommended.
4. Challenge and scrutiny.	4. The recruitment of a governor with a legal background is recommended.

Fig. 4

The processes and structures that equip members to optimally delivery objectives, act with transparency and be in compliance with regulations

Background

Board Structures include all the arrangements for governance and processes that provide clear rules and procedures for conducting effective meetings. Operating in line with an approved code of governance and ensuring stakeholders have timely access to information to support transparency are key to good governance. This section also considers how the board evaluates and reports on its performance and that of its individual members.

MidKent College operates the traditional FE committee model. The Board usually meets five times a year, with at least one strategic away day. There are five committees: QTL which usually meets three times a year (plus monthly telecoms); S&G usually meets four times a year; GR&A meets four times a year; remuneration meets once per term and the F&R committee usually meets five times a year.

An evaluation of the Board's structures included an analysis of

- The Board's governing documents and arrangements
- Mechanisms for setting and reviewing strategy
- How the Board and governors undertake evaluations of individual and Board performance

Findings

Committees

Each committee has a detailed and thorough Terms of Reference (ToR) document which includes a useful cycle of business for each committee and lists items to be considered for each agenda. ToRs are reviewed by the respective committee and then approved by the Board annually, which is best practice and ensures the ToR remain fit for purpose, align with the College's current objectives and changing external environment, and comply with standing orders.

A calendar of meetings is scheduled well in advance and the Clerk holds an in-depth and detailed Governing Body Cycle of Business (Paper SGB24/1882). This schedule is based on the annual cycle of College business and is aligned with the College's meeting schedule. Committee meetings are timed to feed into Board meetings, common practice in the sector.

The Board Chair and committee chairs attend agenda setting meetings in the weeks leading up to meetings. The Clerk provides a draft agenda that is then discussed and updated by the Chair or committee chairs and the executive team. Agendas are clear with presenters noted, paper numbers listed and an area which confirms if an item is for approval or note. The word 'discussion' could be added to this.

Agendas on BI indicate how long each item is expected to take, which is good practice and focuses the minds of both Chairs and governors. The BI agendas also have clickable links which take you straight to items. These agendas also have handy insight and annotation areas – some governors were seen in meetings utilising these capabilities.

Cover sheets, or strategic summary sheets, introduce each agenda item and are very thorough. They include a short description of the purpose of the paper; recommendation (for decision or information); key issues; strategic priority links; an area for governors to list how they can validate the information in this paper; risk implications/assurance and any implications for legal, E&D, H&S or safeguarding/audit. These sheets are informative but would benefit from a more detailed executive summary, instead of a paragraph on the 'purpose of report.' It is also recommended that they include an area to list if an agenda item has previously been discussed at a committee meeting.

Board and committee agendas include dashboards and infographics, both of which can be an accessible way to understand complex information or data. Governors welcomed their use and wanted to see more – it is understood a governor KPI dashboard is in development, which is best practice, and becoming more common, in the sector.

Broadly, student performance and student experience is at the heart of decision making, as observed at Board and committee meetings, and as evidenced through the survey. When asked if the board listens to students and student interests are actively considered and central to board decision making, eight members strongly agreed and six agreed. Similarly, through the survey, board members expressed a strong passion for ensuring the best possible student experience, emphasising that the Board is highly student focused.

A good example of this was observed at the October Board meeting where there were some persistent challenges around a safeguarding report. Another example was observed at the September QTL meeting, when committee members sought assurance over student performance. Initial questions were followed up – challenge was persistent, intelligent and polite.

The College is financially 'outstanding' and, thanks to a real depth of professional experience on the Board, governors' scrutiny of financial matters and challenges is impressive. Both the finance and audit committees are particularly strong in terms of financial scrutiny and challenge – and in understanding the often complex world of FE finance.

Through the survey, when asked if the Board effectively balanced financial management with ensuring value for money and maintaining the quality of its offer, nine members strongly agreed and five agreed. Governors felt that the Board takes a balanced approach to financial management, ensuring the College remains financially stable while continuing to deliver high-quality education and support for students. They carefully review budgets, monitor spending, and ask pertinent questions to ensure value for money, while also focusing on strategic investments in teaching, resources, and facilities that benefit learners.

A good example of this was observed at September's F&R committee when governors wanted to know the implications – financial, estate wise and staffing wise – on increased recruitment. Governors weren't satisfied with celebrating an increase in numbers, they wanted to know what the implications of more students would be to the College.

When asked through the survey if the Board receives regular, detailed updates on committee activities (including key decisions, progress on initiatives, and any risks or opportunities encountered) ten members strongly agreed and four agreed. Board members felt that detailed minutes are promptly uploaded to BI and their accuracy is reviewed at the following meeting. They noted that any relevant developments occurring outside of meetings are communicated in a timely manner, with key points and important considerations clearly highlighted.

Triangulation

The 'How can governors validate the information presented in this paper' section of the cover sheets is an excellent example of how the Board and committees triangulate information supplied. It is an intelligent idea and one that other colleges may want to adopt.

The good working relationships between chairs and the executive was cited as another good opportunity for triangulation. Chairs have easy access to members of the exec and during interviews said they felt able to ask senior leaders questions outside of Board/committee meetings. Chairs – and other governors – are often in college and felt these visits were also an opportunity to triangulate information given with both staff and students.

Governors can, and do, attend annual SAR conversations and validation meetings which is another opportunity for triangulation. Governors interviewed said student and staff surveys were another way to validate what they're told.

The College used to have a comprehensive Link Governor scheme, with most governors being 'linked' to an area and a member of the executive team. That has been mostly discontinued, with only safeguarding, careers and SEND link governors being retained (confirmed at May's Board meeting). The scheme has been replaced by a programme of governor visits, whereby governors are invited into College to explore certain areas or themes. Governors are asked to sign up for the programme, and it is reported that most governors have signed up for at least one visit. These visits could be another effective way of triangulation, as do the remaining three link governors. The old Link Governor scheme was discontinued because some governors found it difficult to find the time to complete their visits. The new programme of visits is far less formal, but there is still documentation in place to capture the visits.

Meetings with students can be a good source of triangulation. There are opportunities for governors to meet with students at MidKent – there are normally two student governors on the Board, visiting governors talk to students in the canteen and during learner walks, and governors can attend the regular student voices conferences, for instance – but the student voice could be louder. This was a point made by governors during interviews and through the survey. The previous EBR said work was underway to strengthen the student voice, but more work needs to be done – some of the governors interviewed said they very rarely met students other than student governors. When asked through the survey what one change could improve the Board's effectiveness, several governors said more engagement with students.

It is recommended that the Board explores opportunities to increase engagement and interaction between governors and students. For example, could a termly governors' lunch be organised in which half a dozen students are invited to meet three or four governors? There would be no agenda, just an ambition for governors to explain the role of the Board and then understand more about the student experience at MidKent College.

(It's worth noting that a new student governor attended his first meeting at the observed October Board meeting. He was guided through the meeting by fellow governors and the Chair directed questions at him to ensure he felt part of the proceedings. Through the survey, Board members felt that student governors are well supported to participate proactively and equally in Board activities, with the Chair making a deliberate effort to engage them during meetings. A former student governor was interviewed as part of this Review and had

clearly felt fully engaged with the College and role and was complimentary about the level of support he received both by fellow governors and members of the executive).

The staff governors interviewed said they felt a valued part of the Board and could be open with their views. When asked through the survey if the Board listens to staff, six members strongly agreed it does, six agreed, and two members were neutral. Board members noted that the two staff governors contribute freely and openly to discussions, ensuring that staff perspectives are well represented. They highlighted the Principal and Chief Executive's role as an effective conduit for broader staff engagement and acknowledged that the Board receives regular information from the College, including communications related to staff engagement. Some Board members felt that, although there are clear channels for two-way communication regarding staff and feedback, these could be more effectively highlighted and brought to life during meetings. Others felt that governors attending faculty meetings could be a good way forward.

During 1-2-1 interviews some governors expressed a view that they wanted more opportunities to meet staff. This would help with triangulation and it is recommended that the Clerk and Board explore more opportunities for governors to meet staff – while acknowledging that the open and inviting nature of the College already provides opportunities such as learning walks and the informal visit programme.

Documents

A long list of the Board's governing documents requested for this Review were provided, with many of them accessible through the BI platform, or through the College's website.

The documents are standard for the sector, generally well written and updated regularly (as already stated, committee ToRs are reviewed and updated annually, as are the Standing Orders and job descriptions). The College's Instrument of Government was reviewed and approved last summer by S&G and then Board and then updated again following DfE advice at a Board meeting on July 10 this year.

Unusually, the College does not have a schedule (or scheme) of delegation, a formal document which outlines which decisions can be made by certain individuals or groups, clarifying responsibilities between the Board and the executive. Schemes of delegation are read in conjunction with a Corporation's Standing Order, Instruments of Governance, committee ToRs and the role description of the Board Chair.

The previous EBR, completed in 2023, noted a schedule of delegation was discussed with the Clerk. The triumvirate are content with the current arrangement and explained a scheme of delegation had been discussed, but the S&G committee concluded that the Board's standing orders and instrument and articles covered everything that a scheme of delegation may contain.

The Clerk keeps a Register of Interests which is available to view on the BI platform. Governors update their declaration form annually and the register is reviewed annually by the internal auditors – as reported in a S&G meeting in September 2024.

The role description for the Chair of the Board includes a stipulation that the Chair shall ensure the Clerk completes an annual register of interest. Some colleges include the register of interests on their websites – the College might want to explore this option.

Evaluation

Evaluation and self-evaluation is taken seriously by the MidKent Board and recent improvements will strengthen it further.

Each committee self assesses its performance annually, using its ToR as a framework. The Board used the last EBR action plan as its self-assessment review process and to date, S&G has monitored the Board's performance against the plan – minutes of recent S&G committees include a RAG-rated analysis of areas of development with a timeline. All areas are green apart from one, where the College has decided against the recommendation.

The Board has not completed an internal audit on governance over recent years, preferring to use the EBR as a source of review and assurance. However, last year's Board Away Day was focused on the effectiveness of the Board with actions agreed to further improve governance.

Governors are also involved and engaged in the wider College SAR process. Link governors were involved in the process, and now the Chair and executive will determine which governor will be invited to appropriate meetings, including the SAR validation meetings.

In terms of individual governors' assessment, the Board used to have a process whereby the Chair would have a review with governors within their third year of their term of office. The new Chair recognised this was insufficient and has already met with every governor informally. At May's meeting of the S&G committee it was proposed that governors would self assess their performance using a form between March and July and would then have a 1-2-1 interview with the Chair between September and January. It was agreed to start this process after the completion of this Review. This new approach is best practice and a great opportunity to identify training/development needs and an opportunity to feed governor ambitions into a Board succession plan.

It appears the former Chair's performance was irregularly reviewed by a senior independent governor, but last year the Board agreed that the Chair should be formally appraised annually with feedback from members of the Board and members of the executive. It was agreed that this process should be via a survey of all Governors and the executive, with feedback given via a panel of committee Chairs or the Vice Chair of the Board.

Following this, the S&G committee developed a questionnaire, having considered the recent DfE guidance on Chair/Principal evaluation as well as ETF competencies for a Chair. The first review of the current Chair's performance will be next year.

The effectiveness of some committee meetings was discussed at the end of meetings observed. Until recently, the Board had a 'review of meeting' item at the end of each meeting. This has been replaced with a feedback form which is sent out after each meeting. This anonymised approach is fairer, particularly for staff and student governors when managers are in the room. Response rates will need to be monitored to see if this new approach will work.

The Principal and CEO, and the Clerk are appraised by the Chair (as stipulated in the Chair's role description) and appraisals then go before the remuneration committee (as the committee's ToR) for discussion before going to Board. KPIs are set by the Chair and remuneration committee for the Principal and CEO against the college's overall objectives using both qualitative and quantitative measures of performance. A full, RAG-rated

report of the Principal and CEO's performance against KPIs was delivered to the Remuneration Committee of October 2. A total of 21 objectives were set as part of a 360-degree assessment of his performance.

The Chair appraises the performance of the Clerk, as well as setting KPIs.

The remuneration committee also has an annual confidential discussion with each Senior Postholder without the Principal and CEO present. Minutes of these meetings (not particularly detailed) can be found in the documents sent to the Reviewer.

Strategy and governor input into strategic direction

Governors interviewed felt they had full involvement in planning the college's strategic direction and creating a strategic plan. Longer serving members of the Board said a previous strategic plan had been created by an external consultant, but they felt far more involved now.

The Chair 'refreshed and streamlined' an existing plan at a strategic away day earlier this year, reducing nine strategic pillars to five. Governors and members of the executive interviewed agreed that this was a necessary step in order to simplify the plan and strategic goals. However, there was uncertainty about where the strategic planning process was up to. Some believed the process was complete and a new strategic plan was imminent, while others believed it was a work in progress. Clarity is needed – in order to successfully monitor a strategic plan, all governors should fully understand what the plan involves.

Monitoring of strategic objectives is rightly understood to be a Board priority. Cover sheets for Board and committee meetings list what strategic priorities individual items are attached to. This ensures agendas remain strategic and relevant, as well as sense checking whether items are for Board/committee discussion.

The Principal and CEO's report at the October 2025 Board meeting was focused on reporting, while 13 of the 14 governors surveyed felt governors maintained a strategic focus.

Meetings observed and the interviews completed would back this up, with both governors and the executive agreeing that for the vast majority of time, governors remain strategic and do not stray into operational matters. One member of the executive said: "The Board and committees are strategic apart from when we ask them for views or help with specific operational matters – normally in areas of their professional expertise."

AoC Code of Good Governance and the Nolan Principles

The Board adopted the new AoC Code of Good Governance in 2024. The S&G committee monitors compliance. The committee also commissioned the Clerk and the Data Protection Officer to review the new version of the AoC Code and link it to evidence of compliance. This piece of work is ongoing, but nearing its end, with the final draft with the S&G committee Chair for review and to report back to the next meeting of the committee.

Through the interviews and the survey, it is clear that the Board has an understanding and commitment to the AoC Code. However, there could be better awareness of the Nolan principles. The seven principles are included in the Role and Person Description for governors, and are discussed during the induction process, but a couple of governors interviewed were unsure of what they were. A minuted annual reaffirmation to the Nolan principles is recommended.

Governance section of the college website

The governance area of MidKent College's website is an exemplary example for the sector. It is comprehensive, useful and relatively easy to find – clicking through the About Us subsection.

A message from the Chair is followed by a Meet the Governors area which includes photographs and short biographies of governors. A committee section includes descriptions of each committee and agendas and minutes going back to 2022. Other documents, including committee improvement plans and terms of reference are accessible in this area. Commendably, and unlike too many college websites, this area is up to date and every link tested worked.

All meeting dates for the academic year ahead are available as are a range of other governance documents including the latest annual report and financial statements, the Board's standing orders, the induction and training policy, instruments and articles, governance self-assessment reports and governor role descriptions. The area also includes a resume of the last EBR.

So much important and up to date information being made available is evidence of an open and transparent approach to governance.

Compliance

Each committee's ToR incorporate compliance objectives – for instance the S&G committee's ToR, which include the committee's role in compliance with the AoC Code, and the GR&A committee's role in ensuring compliance with the Office for Students.

Compliance is a particular focus of the GR&A committee through both the strategic and operational risk registers, though there was evidence of the monitoring of compliance in minutes provided for most of the Board's committees.

Last year's annual report states: "The Corporation has ensured that policies, procedures and approval processes have been updated to ensure compliance with the requirements following reclassification. The College has established systems and processes to identify and manage any transactions for which DfE approval would be required."

The same document includes a 'Governing Body's statement on the College's regularity, propriety and compliance with Funding body terms and conditions of funding.' Signed by the Chair and Principal and CEO, this states 'I confirm that no instances of material irregularity, impropriety, funding noncompliance, or non-compliance with the framework of authorities have been discovered to date.'

In interviews, the Chair, Principal and CEO and Clerk were confident of compliance with the appropriate regulations and codes.

Risk

Governors and the executive team were confident a new approach recently embedded at MidKent had made significant improvements to the way in which risks and risk appetite are evaluated. The new approach includes a rewritten policy and committees being given responsibility for their own areas of risk. The GR&A committee retains responsibility for risk (through the Board), but committees report into GR&A on their own areas of risk.

Committees can refer areas of concern to GR&A and in return, GR&A can also ask committees to look at risks it has identified.

Through the survey, governors highlighted close engagement with both internal and external auditors, as well as robust risk management processes. Through the 1-2-1 interviews, both governors and members of the executive team reported a stronger focus on risk and risk appetite, while deep dives into specific areas appeared to be more effective. A thorough deep dive into cyber security was delivered at the GR&A meeting observed on September 18. The presentation was praised by committee members who asked thoughtful, insightful questions.

The same meeting was presented with a new risk appetite statement which had been developed by the Chair of GR&A and the Executive Director – Finance and Facilities. This statement explained a new and simplified approach to risk appetite.

A paper delivered by the Principal and CEO at the meeting also explained how the new risk appetite approach has added four new columns to the College's strategic risk register – acceptable risk level scores, view/opinion, appetite and risk category. Governors also analysed risks being added and taken off the strategic risk register.

The same meeting also looked at an annual review of the operational risk registers for MidKent College and the subsidiary company MKCTS. Again, the operational risk register has recently been updated to include clear identification where risks are classified as within or outside of the agreed risk appetite. Questions throughout the meeting evidenced a real understanding of the challenges and opportunities for MidKent and MKCTS (it is a group committee).

There is clearly an excellent working relationship with regard to risk between the executive team and the GR&A.

However, although governors and the executive are clear that the new approach has already improved the assessment of risk, not all governors interviewed could identify the top five risks facing the college. Governors should be aware of these risks and Ofsted inspectors would expect governors to be able to list the key areas of risk at the College.

The risk register is available on BI and it is presented to the Board (governors were unsure how often, most thought it once a year), but it is recommended that governors have at least biannual conversations focusing on the College's top risks.

Handbook

A governor handbook to help Board members understand their role has been created and was with the executive team for completion and sign-off during the writing of this Review. It will be available through Board Intelligence by the end of 2025. While an excellent idea, the early version seen by the Reviewer does need further development.

While information about the executive team is helpful, there should also be a similar section on governors. Such handbooks also usually include a foreword and welcome from the Chair, and you would also expect to see a link to the AoC Code of Good Governance and to the Nolan Principles, which are short enough to be listed rather than linked.

A more explicit mention of Ofsted, including the College's current grade and the Board's role in inspection, would be expected – the only mention in the version seen was within the description of the Executive Director for Curriculum and Quality's role.

A resume or link to the last External Board Review would add to the short paragraph on self-assessment.

A short resume of the role of a governor and more information about the Board and its running is recommended – information such as terms of office, composition, the roles of the triumvirate, governor conduct, conflicts of interest, decision making, attendance targets, interaction with students and staff, challenge (asking the right questions in the right way), and governor expenses.

The handbook should be digitally available, which would mean updates and changes would be far easier and cheaper than reliance on a printed version.

Conclusions

The Review has identified that the Board Structure at MidKent provides the necessary platforms for scrutiny and challenge. Documentation is clear, up to date and easily available to governors through the BI platform, while a huge amount of information is also readily accessible to the public through an excellent governance area of the College website. This is evidence of the College's open and transparent approach to governance.

Governors understand the importance of triangulation, and the commitment and engagement of governors means there are opportunities to meet staff and students in order to triangulate – although the student voice could be stronger and governors were keen to meet students more regularly.

A new approach to risk is popular with governors and appears to have already strengthened the analysis and understanding of risk.

Committees are well run and are effective – financial scrutiny is particularly strong.

New approaches to annual governor reviews by the Chair, and of the Chair's performance has further strengthened self assessment and self evaluation. Committees used their annually updated ToR as a self-assessment frameworks, while the Board has used findings and recommendations from the last EBR to assess its own performance – and make improvements.

The following table summarises headlines:

BOARD STRUCTURES	
STRENGTHS	AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT
1. Documentation is clear, up to date and easily accessible.	1. Governors want to meet more students and staff.
2. New approaches to governor and Chair reviews has further strengthened self assessment	2. The governor handbook needs more development, while cover sheets need an executive summary and 'previously discussed at' section.
3. The governance section of the College website is excellent.	3. An annual minuted discussion around the reaffirmation of the Board to the Nolan Principles.
4. Triangulation is strong and committees are well run and effective.	4.

Fig. 5

Board Interaction

Behaviours and interactions which allow for an inclusive culture that encourages effective challenge and impact collaboration

Background

Board interaction looks at the recruitment, development and deployment of diverse members in line with established principles of inclusion and effective governance and how productive board relationships can support collective responsibility and accountability.

Recruitment to the MidKent Board is through both word of mouth and recruiters. The quality of governors on a high-performing Board is evidence of an effective recruitment process, which is clearly outlined in the Board's Standing Orders, which also outline the Board's succession planning process.

As stated in its ToR, succession planning is the responsibility of the S&G committee. Minutes of the June S&G committee report a discussion around recruitment (in particular someone with a legal background) and succession planning.

Once on board, governors undergo a thorough induction process. Recently recruited governors were complimentary about the induction process, which two described as 'interesting and thorough.' The process involves meetings with the Chair, Principal and CEO and other members of the executive, tours of the campus and a session with the Clerk. A mentor is provided for new governors who are encouraged to view AoC new governor training videos. Induction for student and staff governors is suitably tailored. Access to BI also provides plenty of background reading for governors.

When asked through the survey if they had received an effective induction process upon joining the board, six members strongly agreed, six members agreed, though two were neutral.

Careful thought is given to committee membership, under the watch of the S&G committee, which regularly reviews committee membership.

Training

Responsibility for training lies with the same committee, and governors are regularly emailed training opportunities by the Clerk who also ensures mandatory training sessions are completed by every governor. The Chair's 1-2-1s with governors will also be used to identify training needs.

In addition, the Board receives four bespoke training sessions a year – for 2025/26 these are safeguarding/PREVENT, SEND, sexual harassment and another topic to be agreed following the completion of this EBR.

Training is provided by external sources – AoC or ETF – and internal sources – members of the executive. A record of governor training and training for the Clerk is on the BI platform. The completion of appropriate training is written into the role descriptions for governors and the Chair.

Through the survey, governors highlighted their commitment to ongoing development, noting that governors participate in training, including EDI sessions. Governors also felt that the Board ensures all governors receive regular and appropriate safeguarding and child protection training, both at induction and on an ongoing basis, with the designated safeguarding governor guiding staff training efforts. They noted that governors stay informed through regular reports and training, enabling them to understand current policies and risks and to ensure a safe for students and staff.

When asked through the survey if they receive ongoing training and development opportunities to support their effectiveness as a governor, seven governors strongly agreed, six agreed, and one was neutral. Board members felt that they were offered a range of training opportunities, including regular mandatory sessions on topics such as safeguarding, SEND, and sexual harassment. They noted that additional training is also provided based on individual skills needs or requests.

Board/executive relationship

There is a mature and effective working relationship between the Board and the executive team. The Board meetings and committee meetings observed were relaxed and governors and the executive team mixed well before the meetings. Governors also appear to get on well with each other and were clearly supportive of each other during meetings. Members of the executive are happy to meet governors outside of meetings to provide information, briefings or updates.

Through the survey the relationship between the Board and the executive was described as excellent. When asked if the Board works effectively with the Principal and CEO and senior team, nine members strongly agreed and five agreed. Governors felt that there are open and effective communication channels between the Board and the executive team, ensuring governors are fully informed about the College's performance, challenges, and opportunities. This collaborative approach enables the Board to provide constructive challenge and support while maintaining appropriate boundaries and avoiding operational interference. Board members also described a friendly yet professional atmosphere, supported by an open-door culture that allows governors to liaise freely with the executive team.

Governors emphasised that, above all, the Board is united by a shared commitment to students, staff, and the wider community.

This sense of a united purpose extends to collective responsibility. During Board and committee meetings observed governors expressed differing opinions, but everyone accepted a majority view once debates were brought to a close. There were no examples observed of governors voting to decide a contentious issue.

Through the survey, governors said they felt that meetings were conducted in a way that encourages confidence and openness, allowing all members to express their views, challenge one another, and question senior leaders appropriately.

Triumvirate

The triumvirate of Chair, Principal and CEO and Clerk meets monthly, with regular communication between each other outside of these catch-ups, with the Clerk meeting (online and in person) the Chair regularly and the Principal and CEO meeting with the Chair regularly too. The impact of such regular meetings that each member of the triumvirate is kept up to date with what other members are working on, what challenges they are facing and any major strategic or operational issues they need to be aware of.

The governance professional is titled Clerk at MidKent and has been in the role since 2011, so is very experienced. She is also very well organised, proficient at minute taking and communicates well with governors. However, the title Clerk could be seen to underestimate the role and duties of a modern governance professional and it is recommended that the term governance professional be adopted and used.

The last EBR noted that there were 'areas of governance, particularly the more strategic ones, where additional capacity, skills and experience are required.' The Reviewer said the Clerk had confirmed some of the strategic needs outlined were not within her skillset or experience.

In response, the College organised a hugely-experienced governance professional to mentor the Clerk, and provided a range of appropriate training courses (listed alongside governance training in training documentation).

Furthermore, the Clerk now works 30 hours a week all year-round, rather than just term time, and also attends meetings of the executive. She is a Senior Post Holder.

It is recommended that the mentor continues to offer support, and that the Clerk continues to benefit from training and guidance around the strategic elements of a contemporary governance professional role.

Specific examples of challenge

As has already been noted, challenge and scrutiny is a strength of the MidKent Board. Various examples of strong and persistent, but courteous challenges were observed.

Governors also related several good examples of where Board challenges have had a significant impact on the College.

One governor said he felt a role of the Board was to challenge the executive to think more imaginatively in terms of using resources. He said a good example of this was the Medway School of Arts. The school was suggested by the executive and would have met a community need, but the business case presented was not strong enough and governors, who believed in the concept, challenged the executive until an appropriate business case was produced.

Another example given was a College alumni network, which the Board had been pressing for, but hadn't been seen as a priority. After pressure from governors, a successful alumni network has been introduced.

Another specific example of challenge which has resulted in changes at the College has been the challenge around the approach to risk appetite. This was seen as not being sufficiently clear or focused leading to the risk register containing risks beyond appetite where no action was being taken. As a result of persistent challenge, and working in conjunction with the executive, the risk policy was rewritten and a new risk appetite statement was produced. This has resulted in a much clearer understanding that risks beyond an agreed risk appetite need to be acted on.

One more example suggested by governors was around the internal audit plan and a three-year strategy plan not being aligned to the MidKent Group's key risks. After challenge and work with the executive, the approach to internal audit was revisited to ensure audits are planned that are focused on the largest risks and risks with the weakest controls.

One area that governors felt they had been less successful, was in the area of maths and English provision. Governors felt that they been challenging the executive around these two subjects for several years – especially around more staff and resources - but that their challenge had not produced a noticeable improvement in results. Two governors interviewed expressed a conviction of maintaining challenge and scrutiny of maths and English performance.

Through the survey, governors described an environment as ‘collaborative, where challenge and debate are seen as constructive, supporting more informed and effective decision-making. Governors also noted that questioning and challenge were actively encouraged, rather than treated as a box-ticking exercise.’

When asked to describe the board's greatest strengths, members talked about the breadth of experience among its members, the collaborative way they work together, and the constructive challenge they bring to discussions. The relationship between the board and the executive was described as excellent, with execs actively inviting scrutiny and challenge.

Governors understood that challenge and scrutiny is a key part of their role, and through the interviews and the survey, it was clear they understood their wider role too – several mentioned the governor role descriptions as evidence.

EDI and Prevent

When asked through the survey if equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) are core considerations in board decision-making, eight members strongly agreed, five agreed, and one was neutral. Board members felt that EDI is fully embedded into the College’s strategic direction, governance, and oversight.

They noted that governors scrutinise EDI in all board decisions and work to ensure that College leadership actively fosters an inclusive environment for both students and staff. EDI principles are central to the College’s vision of creating opportunities and transforming lives for everyone, regardless of background.

Board members highlighted the diversity of the governing body itself, representing a wide range of experiences and perspectives, and emphasized that these values are consistently considered in decisions relating to strategy, curriculum, staffing, and student support. They also champion initiatives such as celebrating cultural events and improving accessibility across campus.

When asked if the board understands its responsibilities for safeguarding and Prevent, and is well-informed about how the College fulfils these duties, 12 members said that they strongly agreed, and two agreed. Governors felt that the Board ensures all governors receive regular and appropriate safeguarding and child protection training, both at induction and on an ongoing basis, with the designated safeguarding governor guiding staff training efforts.

They noted that governors stay informed through regular reports and training, enabling them to understand current policies and risks and to ensure a safe environment for students and staff. Board members actively oversee the implementation of safeguarding measures, ensuring clear procedures are in place to protect learners from harm and prevent radicalisation or extremism, while promoting a culture of vigilance and support across the College community. The designated safeguarding governor works closely with the DSL to evaluate and improve procedures, and the Board ensures robust practices for vetting and appointing staff and volunteers, such as requiring interview panels to have completed Safer Recruitment training.

Conclusions

The following table summarises headlines:

BOARD INTERACTION	
STRENGTH	AREA FOR DEVELOPMENT
1. Induction and continued training are strengths.	1. Continued strategic development for the Clerk.
2. Mature, transparent and constructive working relationship between Board and the executive team.	2. Change the title from Clerk to governance professional to reflect the wider role at the College.
3. Good working relationship between the Triumvirate.	3.
4. Some good specific examples of challenge and the impact they had.	4.

Fig. 6

Overall Board Effectiveness

In assessing overall Board effectiveness, we have focused on the core functions 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 focuses on outcomes. Key Board outcomes are shown below:



Fig. 7

- **Student experience:** Clearly valued and central to the Board's decision making.
- **Integrity:** Commitment to the AoC Code as observed in meetings and through minutes. Most governors aware of the Nolan Principles and they are listed in the College's Standing Orders, but annual reaffirmation is recommended.
- **Quality:** Progress and achievement of students is effectively monitored and scrutinised at committees and Board.
- **Reflectiveness:** The performance and impact of Chair and governors are reviewed annually, as are the performance of each committee and the Board as a whole.

- **Strategic leadership:** Governors felt heavily involved in strategic planning, but some wanted more clarity on the existing plan.
- **Financial Soundness:** A particular strength - robust financial system and processes in place, further strengthened by a new approach to audit and risk.
- **Responsiveness:** Governors have good networks of stakeholders within the local community
- **Inclusivity and Diversity:** EDI are central to decision-making; impact is measured.
- **Collective Accountability:** Responsibility for strategy and decisions and compliant with regulations.

Concluding Judgment

MidKent College has a high-performing Board that is well led and is ambitious for the College and its students. The Board has an excellent mix of skills and backgrounds and the Chair and committee chairs are particularly effective.

At meetings observed, through 1-2-1 interviews and through minutes read, there is clear evidence of a good level of scrutiny and challenge. The Board has several members with financial backgrounds and two former FE Principals – empowering it to provide the requisite level of scrutiny and challenge in the areas of finance and the provision of education.

One good example which had significant impact on the college was the Board's challenge and insistence on a realistic and sustainable business case for the Medway Schools of Arts, which involved substantial investment.

The student experience and inclusivity and diversity are priorities of the Board and the comprehensive self-assessment processes are evident of a reflective and responsive Board.

A relaxed and collegiate environment at meetings encourages discussion and debate, and although governors disagree with each other, the Board shows a consistent level of collective accountability.

As a governor said through the survey, the Board is united by a shared commitment to students, staff, and the wider community.

The concluding judgement is that there is strong evidence that the Board is highly proficient and consistently impacts on College effectiveness and outcomes.

Recommendations and Action Plan

This Review has drawn a number of conclusions about the strengths of the College and areas for development.

We make the following recommendations:

Summary of Recommendations

1. Work needs to be done to improve governors' attendance – an audit of optimum days and times for governors is recommended.
2. It is recommended that the skills audit is updated whenever a governor leaves the Board, ensuring it is always up to date.
3. A governor stakeholder mapping exercise is recommended to make sure the College is taking full advantage of governors' networks and contacts.
4. Increase the number of opportunities governors have to meet students – this will improve governors' understanding of students' experiences at the College and improve triangulation too. Work also needs to be done to widen the core number of governors who meet staff and students regularly.
5. The governor handbook needs developing. This could be a great opportunity to improve governors' knowledge and understanding of the College and the wider FE sector, but key elements are missing in the early version seen.
6. It is recommended that an annual minuted reaffirmation to the Nolan Principles is recorded, providing evidence that the Board understands the principles.
7. Continued strategic development of the Clerk, including continuing provision of her current mentor. This will continue her development into a more strategic governance professional.
8. Change the title from Clerk to governance professional, reflecting the wider and more strategic role governance professionals have in FE governance.
9. Cover sheets would be improved by an executive summary and 'previously discussed at' section. Both of these additions would improve governors' understanding of agenda items and make meetings smoother and more time efficient.

These recommendations have been discussed with the Principal/CEO, the Chair and the governance professional.

The action plan is to be added following discussions at the S&G Committee.