



St Helens College



Strategic Plan

2026 - 2029

Transforming Lives
Through Excellence
in Education and Training

Introduction

“One College, one team, every student.”

This Strategic Plan sets out a bold and values-driven vision for St Helens College and Knowsley Community College for the period 2026-2029.

It is rooted in our mission: **transforming lives through excellence in education and training** and is shaped by extensive consultation with students, staff, employers and community partners.

Our vision is to deliver an exceptional experience so that every student and apprentice thrives and succeeds.

We believe that learning is transformational, not just academically but socially, economically and personally. Our approach is unapologetically ambitious. We are committed to delivering outstanding student experiences and a future-focused curriculum.

At the same time, we will continue to make a tangible contribution to local and regional growth and prosperity, not only by developing the potential of our students as future employees but as an anchor institution across two boroughs and as an employer of choice.

Building on the progress we have already made, we will continue to engender excellence in everything we do, raising ambition and achievement through outstanding classroom practice, high-quality technical and vocational programmes and innovative

use of technology. We will invest in our teachers and support staff, listening attentively to student and staff feedback alike, embracing innovation and building smart, inclusive infrastructure.

Our commitment to exceptional pedagogy is matched by robust support for wellbeing, smooth transitions for school leavers and adult returners and tailored provision for students with SEND.

By combining inspirational teaching with clear progression routes and strong employer partnerships, we will ensure that every student and apprentice has the skills, confidence and opportunities to succeed in education and in work.

Underpinned by our values of **Ambition, Inclusion, Collaboration and Kindness**, this strategy represents the next stage of our journey.

Our strategic goals have been carefully designed to be inspiring, actionable and also measurable, through associated operational plans and key performance indicators monitored by the Corporation Board.

Aligned with the lived experiences and aspirations of our students and partners, our strategic goals set out the most important priorities that will deliver meaningful impact for our students, our local communities and the wider Liverpool City Region.



Progress since 2022

Since launching our 2022-2025 strategy, the College has made significant progress in delivering its six strategic objectives, creating strong foundations for the next phase of its development.

Our relentless focus on delivering an outstanding student experience, inclusive growth and technical and vocational excellence has driven significant improvements in achievement, retention and progression, while strengthening our role as an anchor institution.

A three-year teaching and learning strategy, elevating the importance of teaching, learning and assessment as the key driver of success, has been supported by a universal and tailored professional development offer for all our teachers.

Investment in digital tools and collaborative practice has strengthened pedagogy, with improved outcomes and student feedback confirming the impact of these approaches.

Classroom-based achievement rates have risen significantly since 2023 and apprenticeship achievement remains significantly above national averages.

These transformational changes reflect a culture not just of high expectations for all but also inclusive practice that ensures that our cohorts of disadvantaged students, those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and those previously not in education, employment or training (NEET) achieve in line with or above their peers.

During the last three years, curriculum development has been both ambitious and responsive. The College has continued to deliver the challenging qualification aims and apprenticeship standards that provide the best foundation for further study and employment, while embedding sustainability and digital skills across its programmes.

Employer engagement has now reached the College's "gold standard" in most areas, with industry partners co-designing content, delivering masterclasses and contributing the latest equipment.

New provision has been introduced to meet local priorities, including sensory pathways for high-needs students and new technical routes in Early Years, Health and Social Care, Engineering and Animal Management.

These changes have improved both internal progression and positive destinations, with the vast majority of students now moving into further study or employment.

The College's role and reputation as an anchor institution have been strengthened, enabling a more rapid response to local needs, for example, by stepping in to deliver NEET provision through expanded and offsite programmes, following the closure of St Helens Chamber.

Partnerships with employers, local authorities and community organisations have deepened, underpinning a range of new initiatives including supported internships and ESOL redesign to further refugee integration.

Strategic investment through the Skills Development Fund and Local Skills Improvement Fund has future-proofed resources and embedded green skills and robotics into curriculums.

In terms of growth, the participation of young people has increased year-on-year and the College has retained its position as a market leader for 16-18 apprenticeships whilst also expanding adult and sector-based provision.

While capital investment remains challenging due to national funding constraints, significant upgrades have been delivered to the College's estate and facilities, including state-of-the-art T level facilities, a sensory area, new training kitchens and specialist equipment for green technologies and Industry 4.0.

Finally, through its people strategy, the College has improved engagement with the help of its employee champions and has delivered four competitive pay awards.

Visibility of senior leaders and governors has increased and recognition schemes have strengthened a culture where staff feel valued and supported. This has resulted in a significant reduction in staff turnover and much more positive feedback from our teams.

In conclusion, the College has delivered substantial progress against its 2022-2025 strategy, achieving strong improvements in quality, growth and inclusivity, while reinforcing its position as a leading provider of technical and vocational education and as a trusted anchor institution.

Retention and achievement rates have risen sharply, apprentice numbers have grown while maintaining quality and employer partnerships have deepened to help shape a responsive, future-focused curriculum.

These strong foundations position the College to lead boldly into the next phase of its strategic journey, scaling what already works, innovating with its partners and continuing to deliver excellence for students, employers and local communities.



Strategy & Values

Our strategy provides the building blocks for our ambitions for growth and success. Our values underpin our strategy, guiding every decision and interaction across the College and externally with our stakeholders. They reflect who we are and what we stand for, shaping the way we teach, how we provide inclusive support and the way we work together to deliver excellence for our students and communities.

Ambition

We are **ambitious** for our students, our staff and the communities we serve; deeply committed to raising aspirations and expectations, we motivate each other to be the best version of ourselves and to celebrate success at every stage.



Inclusion

We are **inclusive**, welcoming students and staff with diverse backgrounds and experiences, creating a powerful sense of belonging and shared purpose.



Transforming Lives

Collaboration

We are **collaborative**, working closely with stakeholders to design innovative solutions that unlock the transformative power of learning, drive economic growth, and enrich our communities.



Kindness

We are **kind** in our actions, our words and our intentions; creating a college where everyone feels respected, supported and inspired to succeed.



Empower every student to contribute, thrive and succeed

Key Themes:

- ▶ Deliver evidence-based, inclusive teaching that connects with students, sparks their curiosity, develops industry standard skills and drives continuous improvement in both vocational and academic achievement.
- ▶ Rapidly reduce any gaps in the attendance, achievement and progression of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, through insight-based interventions.
- ▶ Deliver personalised support and mentoring that removes barriers to engagement and learning and underpins the development of strong interpersonal and relationship skills, ensuring that students can thrive both inside and outside of their classrooms and workshops.
- ▶ Further strengthen tailored support for students with SEND and continue to expand local provision to meet the growing need, including through specialist learning support and assistive technologies.
- ▶ Use structured engagement to build aspiration and agency among students, providing leadership training, personal development and enrichment opportunities that build confidence, enhance employability and reflect diverse student needs.
- ▶ Strengthen student voice and embed this further into decision-making to create a responsive and empowering college culture that enables students and apprentices to contribute to the design, delivery and development of their experiences.
- ▶ Lead and tailor transition arrangements for school leavers, adult returners and those who are NEET, effectively tracking and supporting students at key transition points to ensure momentum and aspiration and working with partners to streamline processes and to facilitate improved data sharing.
- ▶ Celebrate and amplify successes to reflect diverse journeys and achievements, building pride, visibility and community connection across all campuses.



Support progression through aspirational and future focused curriculum pathways

Key Themes:

- ▶ Build clear and fully supported progression pathways from entry-level to higher-level programmes, ensuring every student can see and reach their goals, developing new skills, achieving qualifications and building confidence during their lifetime.
- ▶ Through outstanding careers education, ensure that every student and apprentice has a clear understanding of an ambitious route to their next step. Whether that is to further study, employment or higher education, progression is both expected and celebrated.
- ▶ Establish additional dynamic collaborations with industry partners that support the design of college provision, with innovative approaches to the development of staff to include dual professional roles, industry placements and shared CPD, ensuring that programmes are informed by industry insight and that skills teaching remains a strength.
- ▶ Invest in AI-enhanced, digitally enabled learning environments that transform teaching and assessment and make learning flexible, engaging and more available.
- ▶ Ensure that curriculum design reflects diverse perspectives and is fully accessible to students from all backgrounds, accelerating progression for those with more complex needs through tailored support and curriculum adaptation.
- ▶ Align college courses with existing and emerging priority sectors and national skills missions, providing the necessary skills for both new entrants to the job market and for reskilling and upskilling those already in work.
- ▶ Embed digital fluency, sustainability and employability across all programmes to future-proof students.
- ▶ Promote level 3 as first-choice for school leavers and progressing students, positioning the College as a destination of ambition and excellence.
- ▶ Strengthen routes into higher technical qualifications, higher apprenticeships, and degrees, through the delivery of the College's refreshed higher education strategy, positioning it as a key local provider of high-quality higher education and equipping students for success at this level.



Expand flexible and inclusive learning opportunities for adults

Key Themes:

- ▶ Expand and enhance digital, modular, hybrid and evening learning to meet the needs of adult students and career changers, providing courses that best fit around work, caring and family life.
- ▶ Enable adults to build the skills and qualifications they need to progress or change direction in their careers, equipping them to succeed in a rapidly evolving economic landscape.
- ▶ Work with employers and local partners to remove barriers to adult participation and to unlock opportunities for advancement and progression into meaningful work.
- ▶ Deliver offsite and community-based provision, to connect underserved neighbourhoods to learning to drive inclusive participation and growth.
- ▶ Support reskilling and upskilling of adults into roles in Construction, Engineering, Digital and other priority and growth sectors.
- ▶ Enhance the overall impact of adult learning by embedding a comprehensive and purposeful programme of personal development opportunities that strengthen adults' wellbeing, confidence and progression outcomes and enable them to thrive in further study, work and wider life.



As an anchor institution in two boroughs, build strong partnerships for jobs and growth

Key Themes:

- ▶ Be a visible, trusted civic partner acting as a hub for inclusion and opportunity, deepening local relationships and partnerships with employers, schools and civic leaders to co-design and enhance learning opportunities and amplify impact, driving regeneration, opportunity and inclusive growth across the Liverpool City Region.
- ▶ Further align the curriculum with local and regional economic and skills priorities, actively contributing to regeneration, key initiatives and infrastructure projects by developing a talent pipeline of students and apprentices with the skills needed to contribute and to lead.
- ▶ Develop and embed soft skills, agility, growth mindset and adaptability as core employability traits across all programmes, ensuring that every student and apprentice is equipped with the skills, behaviours and experiences needed to succeed in the workplace.
- ▶ Retain the College's position as the market leader for 16-18 apprenticeships and further expand apprenticeships, work placements and real-world projects at scale, especially in priority sectors.
- ▶ Use campuses and community spaces to target outreach and support to underrepresented groups and economically inactive adults, widening participation and ensuring that the College drives equity and opportunity.
- ▶ Mobilise alumni and employer mentors to guide, inspire and connect students to real-world opportunities, sharing impactful stories to build visibility and influence.
- ▶ Act as a thought leader in education and skills networks and contribute as a key driver of economic development, social mobility and civic renewal across St Helens, Knowsley and the wider city region.



Foster a college culture that connects and inspires

Key Themes:

- ▶ Strengthen cross-campus collaboration and shared purpose, ensuring leadership visibility and college investment narratives reflect parity between St Helens and Knowsley, promoting a shared identity that values both local distinctiveness and collective ambition.
- ▶ Continue to develop staff-led innovation groups that shape strategic delivery and drive improvement through distributed leadership models and solutions-focused approaches. Establish cross-campus 'culture champions' to share best practice, celebrate success, build connectivity and amplify key messages.
- ▶ Continue to invest in meaningful professional development opportunities focused on inclusive teaching, digital innovation and sector-specific expertise, informed by industry partners and other stakeholders and by harnessing the power of AI to streamline systems and reduce workload.
- ▶ Build high-performing, inclusive and values-driven college teams that model excellence and support every student and apprentice to succeed.
- ▶ Improve clarity and consistency in communications across teams and campuses, creating structured feedback loops to ensure staff voices are heard, acted on and followed up.
- ▶ Promote ambition, inclusion, collaboration and kindness as core cultural values that shape student and staff experience, embedding these principles into performance management frameworks, team development and leadership behaviours.
- ▶ Create rewarding careers at the College, providing opportunities for development and advancement, encouraging and facilitating networking to learn from the best, while recognising and celebrating excellence and staff achievements.



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St Helens College

