

Woking College Strategic Plan 2025-28: Building on Excellence

Introduction

At Woking College, success is not accidental. It is rooted in ambition, care and clarity of purpose. As a high-performing, inclusive sixth form college, we believe in the potential of every academically focused student who walks through our doors - and we are proud to help shape lives through outstanding achievement, opportunity and care.

This strategic plan builds confidently on our strengths and sets a course for an even brighter future—for students, staff and our wider community. It is a bold affirmation of what we do exceptionally well and guiding principles, which ensure students continue to leave us with excellent results, broader life choices, and the confidence to thrive.

The local and national context

Woking College begins this strategic cycle from a position of strength—as a high-performing, inclusive sixth form college with a strong academic reputation, sound financial management, and a clear commitment to student success. However, the broader environment in which we operate is becoming more complex and challenging. As a Single Academy Trust (SAT), the College has both the autonomy and the responsibility to respond proactively to this shifting context.

Over the next three years, a number of external factors will shape our strategic choices:

1. Funding Pressures and Financial Uncertainty

While the government has announced some increases in funding for 16–19 education, in real terms funding per student remains significantly below where it stood a decade ago. Rising costs - including pay, energy, and support services - combined with increased student numbers, mean we are being asked to do more with effectively less resource. The outcomes of future government spending reviews remain uncertain, making prudent financial planning and careful prioritisation essential to sustaining high-quality provision.

2. Curriculum Reform and Policy Change

Review and then possibly reforms to post-16 qualifications are underway. The stalling introduction of T Levels and the defunding of many applied general qualifications (e.g. some BTECs) will continue to reshape the landscape. Woking College must respond with agility, ensuring students continue to have access to well-respected, fundable courses that lead to positive destinations. We may face greater accountability through performance measures, inspection frameworks (Ofsted), and possible policy shifts.

3. Demographic Growth and Changing Student Needs

Accurate and reliable demographic projections are not available, but estimations suggest that the 16–18 population in Surrey is projected to grow by around 5% and then level off from 2028-9, and so likely to increase demand for places at the College. This presents a challenge to the College as it is near capacity and there is significant pressure on staffing, facilities, and support services. At the same time, we are seeing a rise in the number of students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), including those with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), alongside an escalating need for mental health and wellbeing support. Meeting these needs requires efficient use of specialist staff and services, as need must be balanced against limited funding.

4. Inequality and Attainment Gaps

Although Surrey is often seen as an affluent county, there are pockets of deprivation and inequality that affect students' educational readiness and support needs. Persistent attainment gaps—particularly among disadvantaged learners—highlight the importance of targeted intervention, inclusive teaching, and strong pastoral care. The College's role as a comprehensive, inclusive provider means we must continue to ensure that all students, regardless of background, have the opportunity to succeed.

5. Local and National Priorities

There is a growing expectation for post-16 providers to respond to labour market needs. While Woking College is predominantly academic in focus, we must remain alert to how our curriculum and progression pathways equip students with the skills and flexibility needed for a changing economy. We also expect to lead on wider priorities including sustainability and digital literacy (including AI), and lifelong learning. Although, as a SAT the College is not directly controlled by the Local Authority, the College will need to remain aware of the reorganisation of Surrey into two political areas and the disappearance of Woking Borough Council as a political authority

*The five strategic pillars of this Strategic Plan—**Vision & Ethos, Excellence in Teaching, Responsiveness, People & Culture, and Sustainability & Partnerships**—have been designed to guide the College through a period of sustained, responsive success, while protecting the high standards, inclusive values, and student-centred ethos that define Woking College.*

1 Vision, Values & Ethos

At Woking College, academic success and personal development are our foundations - empowering students with the qualifications, confidence and choices to shape their futures. As a proudly comprehensive sixth form college, we are committed to transforming the lives of our students on a path to academic success—whatever their background. Our culture

creates a humane community of aspiration, inspiration, challenge, inclusion, and care, in which all can thrive.

Strategic Objectives:

- 1.1 Champion our inclusive ethos**, welcoming and supporting a diverse range of students united by ambition and the drive to succeed.
- 1.2 Celebrate a culture of wellbeing**, kindness, pride and community, where every student feels they belong.
- 1.3 Promote values that last a lifetime:** independence, responsibility, optimism and respect.
- 1.4 Uphold our role within the wider community**, including our valued adult learners—particularly those developing English as a second language.
- 1.5 Lead on sustainability and social responsibility**, promoting environmental awareness and active global citizenship.
- 1.6 Maintain outstanding safeguarding**, ensuring that safety, respect and compassion underpin every aspect of college life.
- 1.7 Embrace emerging technologies**, including AI, to enhance teaching and personalise learning, equipping staff and students with the digital fluency and critical literacy to thrive in a rapidly evolving world.

2 Excellence in Learning, Teaching & Achievement

We are unapologetically ambitious for each of our students and unrelenting in the pursuit of academic excellence. We believe in adding value to every learner, building on their prior performance to unlock new levels of success. Exam outcomes are not simply a measure of achievement—they are a gateway to greater life choices.

Strategic Objectives:

- 2.1 Ensure exceptional academic outcomes**, opening doors to university, apprenticeships and employment, so students leave with maximum choice and confidence.
- 2.2 Embed a rigorous and engaging learning culture**, combining high expectations with warmth, support and creativity.
- 2.3 Celebrate individual progress and achievement**, including top university and apprenticeship offers, personal bests, and overcoming challenges.

- 2.4 Promote curiosity, independence and critical thinking**, encouraging students to flourish beyond the syllabus.
- 2.5 Develop problem-solving and softer skills**, preparing students for a complex, changing world.
- 2.6 Offer broad enrichment opportunities**, supporting the development of confident, well-rounded individuals.
- 2.7 Recognise and reward value-added**, ensuring that all students—regardless of starting point—achieve their potential.

3 Quality, Innovation & Responsiveness

As a confident, future-facing college, we evolve through reflection, innovation and collaboration. Our improvement is bold, responsive and grounded in evidence.

Strategic Objectives:

- 3.1 Drive robust quality improvement**, using data, research and student voice to refine our provision.
- 3.2 Champion innovation**, particularly in curriculum design, digital learning and teaching practice.
- 3.3 Remain agile and responsive**, adapting to national developments, student needs and local priorities.
- 3.4 Communicate clearly and positively**, sharing our ambition, achievements and ethos with all stakeholders.

4 People, Culture & Wellbeing

Our success is powered by our community. We nurture a culture that values wellbeing, celebrates individuality, and promotes professional and personal growth for students and staff. A thriving and humane college community is built on care, high expectations, and mutual respect.

Strategic objectives:

- 4.1 Prioritise wellbeing and resilience**, ensuring all individuals can flourish.

- 4.2 Support inclusive behaviour and high standards**, maintaining a safe, respectful and energised environment.
- 4.3 Model and nurture positive behaviours**, encouraging leadership, integrity and responsibility.
- 4.4 Equip students for future success**, with communication, teamwork and employability skills.
- 4.5 Celebrate diversity**, remove barriers to success and support all students to thrive.
- 4.6 Invest in our staff**, providing meaningful development, recognition and innovation opportunities.

5 Sustainability, Growth & Partnerships

We are ambitious for the future - growing thoughtfully, collaborating purposefully and staying true to our mission. In a period of financial constraint for public services, we are committed to protecting our high standards through careful planning and strategic investment.

Strategic Objectives:

- 5.1 Protect our comprehensive mission**, remaining open to all academically focused 16–19 learners.
- 5.2 Manage growth responsibly**, balancing student numbers with high-quality experience and financial resilience. The College will plan to have a maximum of 1850 students during the term of this strategic plan.
- 5.3 Secure long-term financial sustainability**, through efficient resource use, prudent investment and adaptability.
- 5.4 Develop our site and facilities**, supporting both academic excellence and student wellbeing.
- 5.5 Respond effectively to increased class sizes**, preserving the quality of teaching and support.
- 5.6 Clarify and strengthen our brand**, with marketing that reflects our values and confidently defines who we are.
- 5.7 Deepen partnerships** with universities, employers, schools and community groups, including those supporting adult learners.
- 5.8 Explore additional funding streams**, including grants, partnerships and innovation-led initiatives.

Why This Strategic Plan Matters

Our Strategic Plan 2025–28 is both a reaffirmation of our mission and a forward-looking roadmap for adapting to change. It reflects the need to be financially sound, balancing growth with quality, innovation with stability, and ambition with realism.

For Trustees, this plan provides a clear framework for governance, ensuring that strategic oversight is aligned with the College's long-term vision, regulatory responsibilities, and moral purpose. It supports sound decision-making in a time of uncertainty and enables the College to remain not just resilient, but aspirational.