

New College Durham

Governance review

A report from GGi

Creating lasting value for society

January 2026

Executive summary

New College Durham is a high-performing further education college, which is evident in its achievement and retention rates, alongside high student satisfaction levels. In this review we met with governors and senior leaders who are passionate about the organisation and committed to make the college the best it can be for its students, its staff and for the North East.

An important part of this is the college's commitment to good governance. Overall, the college has a strong governance foundation, robust processes and passionate leadership. We witnessed a lot of good practice and evidence of focused effort to improve on areas that were identified through the previous external governance review in 2022. This included improving the calibre and diversity of governors and working together to build a high level of trust at board and with the college's senior leaders.

Our findings and recommendations in this report should be seen in this context - this is an organisation with strong governance arrangements. In carrying out this review we have sought to identify areas where governance could be further improved, to support the college's vision to be a trailblazer.

Key findings

Our key findings and recommendations are as follows:

- **Corporation function and effectiveness:** Meetings are consistently well-attended and conducted in a respectful atmosphere. Strengthening documentation and deepening levels of constructive challenge would further enhance effectiveness.
- **Strategic direction and planning:** The current strategy is clearly articulated and well understood by the leadership team. Building wider staff awareness and embedding a more forward-looking approach to risk would add further value.
- **People and relationships:** Relationships between governors and senior leaders are strong and collaborative and there is scope to extend this engagement more systematically across the wider organisation. Induction and training are well regarded.
- **Stakeholder engagement and diversity:** Staff and student voice mechanisms are well established, with inclusive practices increasingly visible across the organisation. Continued focus on diversity and visibility at corporation level would help ensure governance fully reflects this commitment.