Belonging and Inclusion

Annual Report

1 August 2025 to 31 July 2026

College objectives 2026/27

Internal

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Foreword

This report complements the Belonging and Inclusion Policy and recognises our legal responsibilities as set out in the Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty relating to the protected characteristics of sex, gender reassignment, disability, race, age, marriage and civil partnership, religion or belief, pregnancy and maternity and sexual orientation.

As an employer and learning organisation we will conduct our business by following the values of ASPIRE.

Accountability	Accept responsibility for our actions, decisions and policies and their impact on staff, stakeholders, and the environment.
Safeguarding	Maintain a safe and inclusive environment in which students can learn, achieve and progress.
Partnerships	Work with those who share our vision and values
Inclusion	Foster an environment that promotes belonging and inclusion enabling all to reach their full potential.
Respect	Treat everyone with respect, fostering trust, openness, and honesty.
Excellence	Achieve and maintain high standards in everything we do.

The College is committed to.

- Creating a positive and inclusive environment that is welcoming and supportive.
- Promoting a culture of belonging and inclusion.
- Zero tolerance of discrimination or harassment.
- Ensuring individual needs are met, so everyone can achieve to the best of their ability.
- Improving what we do to enhance the opportunities we provide.

This report is crucial in demonstrating our commitment to fairness and inclusivity, tracking progress made, identifying areas for improvement and validates we are meeting legal compliance.

The report contains an overview of staffing data, reports on progress made against our objectives for 2025/26 and highlights examples of good practice from across college for academic year 2025/26.

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Progress on objectives for 2025/26

1. Achieve Ambassador Status Better Health at Work

We continued the momentum with the Better Health at Work award and have maintained "Maintaining Excellence" status. Organisations must hold Maintaining Excellence for two years, before they are able to work towards Ambassador status. This action will be carried forward into the next academic year as the portfolio for Ambassador status will be submitted in June 2027.

The annual assessment process for Better Health at Work has allowed us to use external funding and partners to access and deliver a wide range of support and free activities to promote wellbeing in the workplace.

2. Re-brand equality, diversity, and inclusion to Belonging and Inclusion

The Board of Governors, in their November 2025 meeting, agreed that Equality, Diversity and Inclusion would be rebranded to Belonging and Inclusion. They felt that this was reflective of our staff and student body and the culture we want to create in college.

The re-brand has been consistent over academic year 2025/26 and the concept of creating a culture of belonging and inclusion for students and staff is part of our core values and will continue throughout 2026/27.

The Government's 2026 SEND reform agenda represents one of the biggest changes to the SEND system since the Children and Families Act 2014. While many of the proposals will require legislation and will be implemented over several years, there are important strategic implications that FE colleges should begin preparing this has been identified as an objective for 2026/27.

3. Achieved SHINE standard

Achieving SHINE Advanced was an opportunity to collect and collate evidence for 5 beams of good practice;

- Prioritising employee health, safety, and wellbeing.
- Community, net zero and social responsibility.
- Employee Voice, communications, and representation.
- Opportunity for all, inclusivity, upskilling and employee empowerment.
- Fair Work and fair pay for all.

This tool was used as additional self-assessment on policy, practice and support. The award helped us to identify how we go above and beyond to provide safe, supportive, and rewarding workplaces our staff and safe learning environments for students.

In addition to the main objectives, we have continued to seek advice and guidance from the Inclusive Employer Standard. They have supported and advised by completing an accessibility audit and signposting to training resources which has further enhanced our training offer and support for staff.

The achievement of all three objectives set by the Corporation for 2025/26 is demonstrative of the significant progress the College has made in strengthening belonging and inclusion across the organisation

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The College as an employer

The College has a strong reputation for delivering high-quality, inclusive education and remains committed to widening participation by raising aspirations, achievement, and removing barriers to engagement.

Belonging and inclusion are fundamental to creating a positive, respectful and high-performing culture for both staff and students.

Embedding inclusive practices across the College strengthens wellbeing, engagement and collaboration, contributing to better outcomes for individuals and the wider community.

Effective policies and practices help to attract, develop and retain talented people, encourage innovation and creativity through diverse perspectives, and ensure that the College meets its legal and ethical responsibilities (Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty).

Supporting students

Students increasingly expect more from an education provider than academic achievement alone. They value colleges where they feel welcomed, respected, represented and able to be themselves, regardless of their background, identity or personal circumstances. A strong culture of belonging and inclusion helps students to build confidence, develop positive relationships and engage more fully in college life, leading to improved attendance, wellbeing, achievement and progression. By creating an environment where every student feels safe, supported and valued, the College is better placed to attract and retain a diverse student population, meet the needs of its local communities, and prepare learners with the skills, understanding and respect needed to succeed in an increasingly diverse society and workplace. This commitment not only enhances the overall student experience but also strengthens the College's reputation as an inclusive provider where every individual has the opportunity to thrive.

Staff profile and data (including Governors)

Monitoring staff data is essential to enable informed, evidence-based decisions that support belonging, inclusion and organisational performance. By analysing workforce data relating to protected characteristics, recruitment, progression, training participation, retention, absence and employee engagement, the College can identify trends, understand where barriers may exist and take targeted action to improve outcomes for all colleagues.

This ensures that policies and practices are fair, inclusive and effective, while demonstrating compliance with the Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty. Regular monitoring also helps the College to build a workforce that reflects the diverse communities it serves, strengthens staff wellbeing and engagement, supports talent attraction and retention, and ultimately enhances the experience and outcomes of students by fostering an inclusive culture where everyone feels valued, respected and able to achieve their full potential.

Staffing data has been cross referenced against Further education workforce - Explore education statistics - GOV.UK.

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Staff Data

For the purpose of this report the equality data is based on staff actually employed as of July 2026.

- 690 staff employed
- 614 staff substantive or fixed term
- 76 supply pool

Gender

The College's workforce is comprised of 445 (65%) female staff and 245 (35%) male staff. This closely reflects the national Further Education (FE) workforce profile published by the Department for Education (DfE) on 14 May 2026, based on data collected through the Further Education Workforce Data Collection (FEWDC) for the 2024/25 academic year, which reported that the FE workforce comprises 65.2% female and 34.8% male staff.

During this academic year, the College celebrated both International Women's Day and International Men's Day through a range of activities recognising and promoting the positive contributions that women and men make within our workforce and the wider community. These initiatives complemented our ongoing wellbeing support, including our Men's Mental Health Group and Menopause Support Group, demonstrating our commitment to fostering an inclusive workplace where colleagues of all genders are valued and supported.

Age

The median age of our overall workforce remains the same as 2024/25 at 46 years old. DfE workforce data for 2023/24 reported that the median age of staff within FE is 46 which demonstrates our workforce is representative of the general workforce. It is worth noting that 16.97% of our workforce are aged 60+, this is an increase of 4% on last academic year and indeed some staff are choosing to enter the profession at a later date bringing a wealth of industry experience to the curriculum. The oldest member of our workforce is 83 (supply pool member of staff) and the youngest 19. In recognition of the diverse range of ages within college, we have this year been working with a company called ProAge who have delivered a variety of workshops exploring and sharing intergenerational views and experiences within the workplace.

Ethnicity

County Durham has one of the lowest proportions of people from ethnically diverse backgrounds in England. According to the 2021 Census, fewer than 2% of the local population identified as belonging to an ethnic minority group. Within the College, 3.4% of staff have identified as being from an ethnic minority background, which is slightly higher than the proportion reported across County Durham. Nationally, however, the Further Education (FE) workforce is more ethnically diverse, with approximately 19–20% of staff identifying as belonging to an ethnic minority group.

Throughout this academic year, the College has continued to celebrate and recognise the diversity of its staff and student community. Celebrations for

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Diwali and Eid were supported by our ESOL students, who organised a range of activities and shared their cultural experiences and traditions through informal "Tea and Talk" sessions. These events provided valuable opportunities for staff and students to come together in a welcoming and inclusive environment, promoting greater cultural understanding and awareness.

These activities reinforce the importance of recognising and valuing the diversity within our workforce and student community. By fostering an inclusive culture where different backgrounds, experiences and perspectives are respected and celebrated, the College is better equipped to meet the needs of our diverse student population and the communities we serve.

Disability

The college is proud to be a Disability Confident Leader (Department for Work and Pensions) and have achieved bronze for Inclusive Employer Standard. These standards help us to annually assess achievements and areas where we can continue to improve.

Currently, 8.5% of our workforce have indicated that they have a disability which is the same as 2024/25. Reported data in the DfE workforce report stated 7.3% of the further education workforce identified as having a disability.

Our external partners have continued to support the College in delivering a broad programme of staff development, focusing on key themes identified through Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) and Medical Management Plans (MMPs). This collaborative approach, underpinned by strong links between external providers and internal support teams, ensures that staff are equipped to meet the diverse needs of our students.

The College provides a wide range of reasonable adjustments and specialist support, including specialist learning support, Access Advisers, assistive technology, examination access arrangements and accessible facilities, enabling students to participate fully in their learning.

During the academic year, staff participated in a range of targeted training and awareness sessions, including Deaf Awareness and ADHD in Girls. These sessions have enhanced staff knowledge and confidence, enabling them to better understand individual needs and provide effective, inclusive support throughout students' learning journeys.

While not every protected characteristic is specifically highlighted within this report, the College remains fully committed to advancing belonging and inclusion for all staff and students. The activities and examples included reflect the priorities identified during the reporting period through workforce data, staff engagement, lived experience, employee feedback and organisational need.

The absence of specific initiatives relating to a particular protected characteristic should not be interpreted as a lack of commitment. Rather, it reflects the priorities and areas of activity identified during the reporting period.

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The College is committed to ensuring that all protected characteristics are considered through its policies, practices and decision-making processes.

The College will continue to monitor data, listen to the experiences of staff and students, and respond to emerging needs to ensure that our approach remains inclusive, equitable and responsive. Through continuous review and engagement, we will build on existing good practice and further strengthen an environment where everyone feels valued, respected and able to achieve their full potential.

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Governor Diversity Monitoring Data

The College is committed to maintaining a diverse and representative Board of Governors and encourages governors to voluntarily provide monitoring information. This data enables the College to understand the diversity of its governing body, identify any gaps in representation and inform future recruitment and succession planning.

Data related to our board of Governors as of July 2026 is stated below.

Sex
We currently have 18 Governors, 11 male, 7 female.

39% female
61% male

Sexual orientation Data

Heterosexual	11
Gay man	0
Lesbian	0
Bisexual	0
Prefer not to say	3
No reply	4

Age
The average age has increased since the previous update (Oct 2025) from 42 to 45.

	16-18
1	19-24
1	25-29
	30-34
2	35-39
2	40-44
2	45-49
3	50-54
4	55-59
2	60+
1	Data not held

Race/Ethnicity
15 out of 18 have declared themselves as White British. 3 did not respond.

Marital Status and Civil Partnership

Single	2
Married	10
Divorced	
Separated	
Partnered	3
No reply	3

Disability
Currently 15 out of 18 have declared that they do not have a disability and 3 did not respond.

Religion/Belief

10	Christian
2	Atheist
1	Agnostic
4	No reply
1	Prefer not to say

Gender Reassignment
At present we don't collect data on gender identity

Pregnancy and Maternity
N/A

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Recruitment, Promotion and Retention

Further Education (FE) providers have continued to face significant recruitment challenges throughout 2025/26, driven by a highly competitive labour market, skills shortages in key vocational sectors, and difficulties attracting and retaining experienced teaching staff. Competition from industry, where salaries often exceed those available in FE, has made it increasingly difficult to recruit specialists in areas such as engineering, construction, digital, health, and STEM subjects. These challenges have impacted colleges' ability to develop a sustainable workforce for the future, limiting their capacity to respond to local skills priorities and employer demand.

The Association of Colleges (AoC) continues to identify recruitment and retention as one of the most significant challenges facing the Further Education sector. Throughout 2024/25 and into 2025/26, colleges have reported persistent difficulties recruiting specialist teaching staff, particularly in high-demand technical and vocational subjects, driven by pay disparities and competition from industry. This reflects the challenges experienced locally, with workforce shortages affecting the sector's capacity to respond to local skills priorities and develop the workforce needed for future economic growth.

The college has invested more heavily in workforce development, flexible recruitment strategies, and partnerships with employers to build talent pipelines, while continuing to play a critical role in nurturing local skills and supporting regional economic growth despite ongoing staffing pressures.

The recruitment and retention of staff has remained a key challenge for the College. Over the past year, a number of measures have been introduced to strengthen our position, including changes to HR practices and enhancements to our pay, reward and benefits offer, particularly in relation to starting salaries (see the next section). While recruitment remains a competitive and challenging market, these actions are beginning to have a positive impact, and the College is in a stronger position than it was during 2024/25.

Recruitment Activity

Staff recruitment at the College remains a key priority for attracting and recruiting the region and beyond. While some of the recruitment challenges from recent years have eased, others remain, it is important to ensure that a focus remains on ensuring we are fully staffed with the best possible talent. We recognise that any gaps in recruitment can have an impact on staff workloads hence the importance of recruiting and progressing through checks as timely as possible. In support our recruitment objectives a number of recruitment and selection strategies have been put in place to have a positive place to attract talent. Strategies include:

- Strong consolidated and non-consolidated pay awards
- Recruitment and Retention Payments for hard-to-fill pots.
- Increased teaching capacity across many curriculum areas.
- Introduction of Clinical Responsibility Allowances
- Achieved living wage accreditation in January 2025
- Expanded our advertising platforms to reach a wider audience
- Progression for staff from level 3 award to Level 4 teaching qualifications.

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We are committed to responding appropriately and positively to these challenges and promoting the College in the best light and the positive reputation that we have both locally and regionally, is a great tool for attracting new staff to the College.

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Support for Staff 2025/26

Detailed below are some highlights of how we have supported our workforce to embed belonging and inclusion.

Spotlight nominations

The introduction of the ASPIRE Awards, aligned to the College's core values of Accountability, Safeguarding, Partnership, Inclusion, Respect and Excellence, has strengthened our culture of recognition, appreciation and belonging. By celebrating the achievements and contributions of colleagues, the awards reinforce the behaviours and values that underpin the College's success.

At a time when recruitment and retention continue to present significant challenges across the Further Education sector, recognising and valuing staff contributions plays an important role in promoting employee engagement, wellbeing and job satisfaction. The ASPIRE Awards support the College's commitment to creating a positive and inclusive working environment where colleagues feel valued, motivated and empowered to achieve their potential, helping to attract, develop and retain a high-performing workforce.

Staff Voice – HIVE

During 2025/26, the College invested in the implementation of the HIVE employee voice platform to strengthen staff engagement and further embed a culture of belonging and inclusion across the organisation. HIVE provided colleagues with accessible, confidential and continuous opportunities to share feedback, express their views and contribute to shaping the employee experience. In addition to being the platform for the annual staff survey it also enables the College to gather real-time insights through pulse surveys, recognise positive contributions, and identify areas where improvements can be made to support staff wellbeing, engagement and inclusion. By listening to colleagues and acting on their feedback, the College is fostering a culture where every member of staff feels valued, respected and empowered to influence positive change. This investment demonstrates the College's commitment to creating an inclusive workplace in which employee voice informs decision-making, strengthens organisational culture and supports the delivery of its strategic priorities.

AOC College Collective

In November, the college joined the AOC College Collective. Joining the Association of Colleges (AoC) College Collective has offered numerous benefits, primarily for staff through professional development, networking, and access to resources and also leading to increased confidence and growth of knowledge to enable support for students and curriculum design. The collective fosters a learning community, connecting professionals across the UK for experience and knowledge sharing exploring key themes as stated below.

- Leadership and ethos
- Support for students
- Workplace wellbeing
- Evidence and impact

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Quality First Teaching: Back to Basics – Inclusion in the Curriculum

Utilised summer staff development day to a whole curriculum approach to focusing on the role of quality first teaching as the foundation of inclusion within the classroom, moving from reactive support to proactive inclusive teaching and learning practice. Collaborating across curriculum teams to share good practice and identify how staff can support one another.

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Staff Social Space

The staff wellbeing space has been redesigned to create a more welcoming, informative and supportive environment that promotes wellbeing, inclusion and a sense of community. The refreshed area now includes a dedicated staff noticeboard where colleagues can access information about upcoming wellbeing initiatives, awareness campaigns, College events and support services. A self-help resource area has also been introduced, providing staff with access to a range of wellbeing materials, including self-help guides, mental health resources and signposting to internal and external support. In addition, a shared staff book swap has been established, encouraging colleagues to exchange books on personal development, wellbeing and leisure reading, helping to foster connection, promote lifelong learning and encourage positive conversations around health and wellbeing.

CECOS Collaboration

The annual Teaching & Learning Conference for HE partners at CECOS was held in Birmingham in April, bringing together staff from across campuses in England to engage in collaboration professional development. the event provided a platform for educators to share best practice, reflect on their own teaching approaches, and explore evidence-informed strategies to enhance student learning & outcomes.

Staff also reflected on how to adapt these strategies for both classroom and online environments, ensuring inclusivity and sustained engagement across different modes of delivery.

Staff Development and bespoke activities

Detailed below activities in addition to those previously mentioned that have been provided for staff this academic year include

For Managers
Menopause - More meaningful and effective support at work
Mental Health for Managers
Third Party Harassment
ACAS Accessibility and Equality Act
Stress Awareness in the Workplace

All staff
Emotional Intelligence - Empowering you to build stronger relationships, make better decisions, and lead with empathy in life.
Show Racism the red card
Brilliant Brains - exploring neurodivergence in the workplace and beyond
Colour blindness awareness
Deaf awareness and understanding how to support deaf community and working with interpreters
Miss Menopause - Menopause Awareness
Dementia Awareness
Life as a refugee which includes the common issues refugees face and a Q and A session
Working with colleagues, students and members of the public who stammer
Impact of child poverty on learning
Dyslexia & Dyscalculia Awareness

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From Awareness to Action: Supporting Autistic and ADHD Students in College
STOP - Suicide Awareness - If U Care Share
Stop Sweating the small stuff
Celebrated National Inclusion Week
Range of activities to promote world mental health day
Support in place for
ADHD in Girls
Dyspraxia and Dyslexia Awareness Week
Belonging and Inclusion focus group
Cancer awareness campaigns and activities

Curriculum staff
Teaching strategies – a range of strategies for creativity in lessons and to ensure practice is evidence informed
Action Learning Set - Inclusive practice
Assessment & Feedback - Feedback That Moves Learning
Inclusion - Quality First Teaching - Every Learner, Every Lesson
Awareness of forced marriage

The examples given are not an exhaustive list but a snapshot of the support given to staff. Having an accurate picture of our staff and students enables us to plan, develop and deliver learning, support services and enrichment activities that are relevant, representative and responsive to their needs and experiences.

This information helps us strengthen our commitment to belonging and inclusion, ensuring that everyone feels seen, valued and supported throughout their journey at the college.

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Support for Students 2025/26

Detailed below are some highlights of how we have supported our workforce to embed belonging and inclusion across curriculum and curriculum support.

What we have done

Throughout the academic year, staff have continued to provide outstanding support to students, going above and beyond to ensure positive learning experiences and inclusive access to education. The College has strengthened its work to widen participation, support under-represented groups and respond to local skills needs through employer engagement, collaboration and targeted student support. Key developments have included continued progress against the Disabled Students' Commitment, with Student Union involvement and consultation around the Student Passport Scheme. Prayer facilities have remained well used, with plans to increase available space through relocation to the main building. The enrichment offer has also been expanded, with protected enrichment time for Foundation Studies students, increased use of guest speakers, employer and university partnerships, and improved recording of participation and engagement within activities through more effective use of ProMonitor.

What we should celebrate

There is much to celebrate across the College, including increased engagement in enrichment activities and a record weekly attendance of 367 students. Activities such as Dungeons and Dragons, retro gaming and the Young Men's Mental Health Group have provided valuable opportunities for students to connect, build confidence and access support, with 45 learners engaging through the young men's mental health offer. Partnerships with organisations such as If U Care Share and Durham University Women's Basketball Team have supported mental health awareness, increased women's participation in sport and raised aspirations. Students have also made a positive contribution to the wider community through enterprise activities, fundraising for local charities, the annual toy appeal and the foodbank campaign, which collected 122.2kg of food, equivalent to 153 meals.

Examples of embedding belonging and inclusion in Curriculum Areas

Curriculum teams continue to play a pivotal role in promoting belonging, inclusion and positive mental wellbeing by embedding these principles throughout teaching, learning and assessment. Across Health, Care and Early Years programmes, learners are supported to develop not only the professional knowledge and skills required for their future careers, but also the empathy, resilience and confidence needed to create inclusive environments for the individuals they will support.

Mental health and wellbeing are integrated across a wide range of curriculum content, enabling learners to explore the impact of inequality, discrimination and stigma on individuals and communities. Through subjects such as Equality, Diversity and Rights, Human Growth and Development, Psychology, Sociology and Community Care, learners develop an understanding of mental health across the lifespan, the importance of early intervention, and the role of person-centred, rights-based approaches in promoting wellbeing. Safeguarding is embedded throughout the curriculum, equipping learners to recognise signs of distress and vulnerability, understand referral pathways and develop reflective

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practice that challenges bias and promotes professional judgement.

Curriculum delivery also focuses on developing the interpersonal skills that underpin inclusive practice. Learners build confidence in communication, active listening and empathy, enabling them to reduce barriers experienced by individuals with mental health conditions and to promote dignity, independence and collaborative care planning. Through research projects, evidence-based practice and learner-led campaigns, students are encouraged to become advocates for mental health awareness, helping to challenge stigma and promote inclusion within their communities. This has been further strengthened through initiatives such as Mental Health First Aid training for Level 3 learners.

Alongside academic learning, curriculum teams place significant emphasis on supporting learners' own wellbeing. Students regularly participate in activities that promote resilience, emotional regulation and self-awareness, including mindfulness sessions, meditation, use of sensory spaces, wellbeing walks and peer affirmation activities. Weekly personal development sessions encourage confidence building and positive self-esteem, while participation in national awareness campaigns helps normalise conversations around mental health and encourages learners to seek support when needed.

Within Early Years programmes, learners further develop their understanding of attachment, emotional development and practitioner wellbeing through specialist guest speakers and practical learning. Students explore strategies that support babies, children and families, including sensory approaches, stress reduction techniques and self-regulation, while recognising the importance of maintaining their own wellbeing to provide high-quality care.

The impact of this work is reflected in learners who demonstrate greater confidence in supporting individuals experiencing mental health challenges, a secure understanding of safeguarding and vulnerability, and the ability to challenge stigma through compassionate, person-centred practice. By embedding wellbeing and inclusion throughout the curriculum, teaching teams continue to create learning environments where every learner feels safe, valued and able to thrive, preparing them for successful progression into further study, employment or professional practice.

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Conclusion

Feedback received through our Inclusive Employers Standard assessment and independent consultant highlights that the College's commitment to Equality, Diversity, Belonging and Inclusion (EDBI) extends well beyond meeting statutory obligations. Inclusion is embedded as a core organisational value and is shaped collaboratively by our staff, students and Governors.

The assessment recognised the significant thought, commitment and collective effort invested in creating an inclusive culture across the College. The progress made during the reporting period was acknowledged as both positive and encouraging, demonstrating a strong foundation on which to build further improvements.

The College's governance arrangements were identified as a particular strength, with Governors providing effective oversight and strategic leadership for belonging and inclusion. Our policies and practices were also recognised as being of a high standard, reflecting our commitment to ensuring that equality, fairness and inclusion are embedded throughout the organisation.

While we are proud of the progress achieved, we recognise that creating a truly inclusive culture is an ongoing journey. We remain committed to listening to the experiences of our staff and students, responding to feedback and continuously reviewing our policies, practices and culture to ensure that everyone feels respected, valued and able to thrive.

This report demonstrates the breadth of Belonging and Inclusion activity across college and that there is a high level of transparency in how we communicate our inclusion objectives and progress. This openness helps build trust and supportive culture for our staff and students. This work demonstrates that our staff and students are integral in shaping our inclusion journey and that they take ownership over inclusion activity, they are given the space and support to lead their own events and activities which is a powerful way to encourage engagement and build momentum.

This academic year has seen the College continue to flourish, with sustained growth in both student enrolment and staffing. Throughout this period of expansion, the College has remained committed to ensuring that growth has not come at the expense of our commitment to equality, diversity, inclusion and belonging.

Instead, we have continued to strengthen our whole-college approach, embedding equality, diversity, belonging and inclusion across our policies, practices and culture. As the College has grown, so too has our focus on creating an environment where all staff and students feel respected, valued and supported to achieve their full potential. This continued commitment ensures that inclusion remains central to the College's strategic priorities and organisational development, enabling us to meet the evolving needs of our diverse workforce, student population and wider community.

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Staff and students continue to ensure that the College remains a place where learning and working exists in an environment that advances and celebrates belonging and inclusion, and allows everyone to achieve their fullest potential.

New College Durham remains committed to the development of positive policies and practices to promote opportunities and support an appropriate learning and work-life balance.

The College will continue to explore ways the existing workforce can be developed to ensure that we have a competent and qualified workforce of the future.

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Appendix A - Key Objectives for 2026/27

	Objective	Impact measure	Date	Outcomes
1	Continue to support the culture of belonging where every staff member and student feels valued, connected, and heard	Increase staff belonging and engagement scores within staff survey year-on-year.	March 2027	70% completion rate on annual staff survey March 2027.
		Foster inclusive teaching practices that reflect diverse learner experiences and needs,	Review December 2026	High proportion of learning walks are identified through Quality First Teach themes are strong and secure. Where identified sessions are developing, or cause for concern actionable support is put in place through SEND practitioner delivering timely training and coaching and mentoring staff to succeed.
		Strengthen collaboration across Schools and Corporate Services.	November 2026	Share good practice through peer-to-peer delivery as part of broader CPD offer and on staff development days.
		Increase opportunities for staff voice and meaningful involvement in shaping College priorities.	August 2026	Increase number of staff who engage and drive forward change through building confidence in actions being taken from focus groups created in summer term of 2026 on key themes raised through the academic year.
2	Enable colleagues to thrive through wellbeing, inclusion, and career development	Strong succession planning and leadership development.	Review December 2026	Develop appraisal and probationary process with a focus on belonging and inclusion and ensure that this is monitored by managers, linked to teaching learning and assessment outcomes.
		Inclusive practice is embedded across curriculum, support, and corporate services.	Review December 2026	College developments, services, and digital innovations are designed with accessibility and inclusion at their core.
		Create Leading Forward programme for aspiring managers/managers.	August 2026	Develop, promote more leadership opportunities, coaching and mentoring for staff regardless of role, background or protected characteristics.
		Develop Belonging and Inclusion bitesize modules (training hub) which will be available on demand for staff to access.	Review December 2026	Ensure that staff have access to a range of training modules, webinars, and resources that they can access as and when to support their knowledge but can also be used within the curriculum.
		Strengthen inclusive teaching and ensure more learners with SEND can succeed within mainstream programmes through high-quality teaching, adaptive practice and reasonable adjustments.	Review December 2026	Embed greater scrutiny on processes and systems to ensure that departments are collectively engaging in supporting students. Every teacher will increasingly be viewed as a teacher of learners with SEND. Staff development in adaptive teaching, differentiation, communication strategies and inclusive assessment will become even more important.
3	Inclusive success for staff and students through a one-college approach	Build a culture where diverse perspectives are welcomed and decision-making is inclusive.	Review December 2026	Staff engage in industry updating, scholarly activity or professional practice relevant to their curriculum area exploring how belonging and inclusion presents in workplace practice.
		Achieve Ambassador Status (BHAWA).	June 2027	New College Durham is recognised as Ambassador Status.
		Review Inclusive Employer Standard Accreditation	December 2026	Seek advice from Inclusive Employer Standard with regards to resubmitting portfolio of evidence for silver recognition, as the college will have held bronze for the standard for 2 years.

The action plan complements The College Operational Plan, Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy, Human Resources Strategy and the Belonging and Inclusion policy.

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