

# External Board Review



*FRANKLIN COLLEGE*

Reviewer: David Wright  
*30 12 2024*

# Executive Summary

In October 2024 the Association of Colleges (AoC) was asked to undertake an independent review of Franklin College. This AoC External Board Review is based on the AoC standard review framework. The Framework considers, but is not limited to, principles from Codes of Governance, the Education Inspection Framework and the DfE's current guidance on external board reviews. In discussion with college leaders, it was agreed to tailor the focus on the standard framework whilst also considering some reflections on best practice in Governance.

The report that follows provides an overview of governance arrangements and assesses them across three main dimensions of governance: the **composition** of the Board, the **structures** within which the Board operates and the **interaction** within the Board and between board members (governors) and senior leaders. It takes account of the principles set out in the Code of Governance that the College has adopted, of the Seven Principles of Public Life (the Nolan principles) and of the Department for Education (DfE)'s guidance on external board reviews.

The DfE defines the core functions of a college board (Corporation) as:

- determining the college's educational character.
- setting and communicating the college's strategy and goals.
- holding executive leaders to account for the educational performance of the college and its staff and the quality of outcomes.
- exercising effective control to ensure that funds and assets are protected, and legal obligations are met.

The objective of the review was to gain an understanding of the strengths of the Board and any areas that would benefit from development. It is also aimed at facilitating collaborative effort between the reviewer and members to explore areas of improvement and overall effectiveness of the board and build upon the last external board review undertaken in 2021. The College Board has recently undertaken an annual self-assessment review and graded Governance as Outstanding but is not complacent and seeks to continuously improve.

Emerging findings have been discussed during the Review in a developmental and inclusive approach that supports College improvement and seeks to share best practice. The report sets out the findings made against the 3 Board dimensions in the Framework with key evidence that informs those findings.

The board demonstrates strong behaviors and characteristics associated with an efficient and effective board (committed, confident, curious, challenging, collaborative, critical, creative) is innovative and transparent with a good mix of skills, experience and understands collective

responsibility in decision making. The board has developed good and effective governance with back-office systems in place to support overall college improvement and continues to listen and adapt to change over time and in response to feedback.

The Governing Body is pragmatic, well informed and actively oversees its strategic objectives. Governors understand its context well and monitor its progress closely, offering senior leaders both support and searching challenge in equal measure. They monitor performance and students' achievements closely and are open with views on college strengths and weaknesses. They receive regular updates on local and national issues. Their expertise in curriculum, finance, legal, audit, strategy, and education management are used to support the development of the College in a productive way.

There is much that is good and positive about governance arrangements at Franklin College, with robust and professional Board interaction. Whilst there would be benefit in the Board continuing to keep its Board structures under review for the future, there is transparency of information and a healthy approach to evaluating how governance is operating in seeking further improvement, with the Board actively measuring impact on college strategy, effectiveness and outcomes.

The reviewer's overall conclusion on Board effectiveness is that there is strong evidence the Board is highly effective and efficient which impacts positively on college strategy, development, and outcomes.

The process involved, in person meetings with the Chair, Principal, Clerk to Corporation and 9 other members of the governing body including students, parent and staff members; a group/individual meetings of senior leaders; a board members survey; examination of a sample of governance documents and papers; an in-person observation of a full Board meeting and in person observation of two Committee meetings.