

Accountability Statement 2023-24



1. College Mission and Purpose

EKC Group's mission is *to play a leading role for East Kent in developing the economic and social prosperity of the diverse communities we serve.*

As an Ofsted 'Outstanding' provider, EKC Group provides inspirational education for young people and adults across the six districts and boroughs of East Kent. Our purpose is to provide inclusive and accessible education that raises the ambitions of our students and enables them to succeed in their chosen pathway, whilst ensuring the curriculum we deliver is clearly linked to skills priorities at national, regional and local level. We are passionate about providing more technical education opportunities for children and young people, which includes working closely with our sister Multi Academy Trust, the EKC Schools Trust. We are a partnership driven education group with a strong sense of civic leadership responsibility and our Strategic Plan sets out five clear goals:

1. Creative a revolutionary model of education, delivering a new range of nationally recognised education solutions for the benefit of East Kent and beyond;
2. Deliver inspirational, inclusive and purposeful education that enables young people and adults to achieve their ambitions and meet the needs of East Kent;

3. Successfully integrate Ashford College and Spring Lane into the EKC Group family, developing the provision to enable the Group to truly meet the needs of the whole of East Kent;
4. Continue to invest in industry-standard facilities and first-class Group services that support our business units to deliver aspirational, relevant and high quality learning experiences;
5. Ensure that EKC Group is an employer of choice and responds appropriately to the social, ethical and moral issues of its communities, supporting the development of well-rounded and responsible young people.

Our Strategic Plan was approved by our Governing Body on 30 June 2020 and can be found at

<https://www.ekcgroup.ac.uk/group/about-us/our-strategy>.

Since its publication, national skills policy has developed further, therefore this annual accountability plan takes account of these changes, including the introduction of Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs). Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce was successful in securing an LSIP Trailblazer and, in parallel, EKC Group secured a Strategic Development Fund pilot, focused on decarbonisation in the engineering sector.

EKC Group is also implementing a significant capital investment programme, drawing on funds such as the FE Capital Transformation Fund, T Level Capital Funding, and Levelling Up (working closely with our District and Borough Council partners). This investment will support an improved infrastructure across the Group's Colleges to deliver a specialised curriculum linked to local needs.

2. The Communities We Serve

Since 2014, EKC Group has grown rapidly from a single-site College in Broadstairs to a family of six Colleges and an EKC Training business unit serving the whole of East Kent and each of its local communities. The Group has worked closely in partnership with key stakeholders to ensure that each of its local Colleges meets the economic, skills and social needs of

its communities, covering the districts and boroughs of Ashford, Canterbury, Dover, Folkestone and Hythe, Swale, and Thanet. Each College has a Local Board which includes representation from local employers and the relevant local authority. As the Group serves a distinct geographic area, its Colleges and EKC Training business unit deliver a co-ordinated curriculum provision, providing clear progression pathways, whilst specialising where appropriate to meet local needs and maintaining a College presence in each of our six districts and boroughs. The Group also works to strategically meet the requirements of ‘communities of need’ such as those learners with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), English as an Additional Language (EAL) and students from disadvantaged backgrounds. This approach ensures the Group can carry out its mission and appropriately serve each of its communities.



Business and economic profile: in common with the rest of Kent, 90% of East Kent businesses employ nine or fewer people, but these micro-businesses account for just 31% of employment, whilst businesses with 50 or more employees account for nearly half (46%). Current employment is focused on health, retail, education, hospitality, and manufacturing, however district, borough and county stakeholders have identified the following priority sectors that are important to the economy:

- Manufacturing
- Visitor / experience economy
- Creative and cultural / digital tech
- Development and construction (including supporting anticipated high levels of house building and infrastructure projects)
- Health and social care

Social needs: there are major social challenges to be addressed:

- 96,000 East Kent working age residents are on benefits, including 25,000 people on Universal Credit in work. The picture varies by local authority area, but Thanet has the highest level of people on benefits.
- There are 25,000 children living in low-income families in East Kent, and the proportion of children in low-income families is higher than the average for the South East region in all six East Kent Districts.
- There are also significant pockets of deprivation: four of the six East Kent Districts (Dover, Folkestone and Hythe, Swale, and Thanet) are in the bottom quartile nationally in terms of the employment deprivation measure.

The resident qualifications profile is poor when compared nationally:

- Fewer residents have qualifications at level 3 or above (54% compared with 57%)

- Significantly fewer have qualifications at level 4 or above (32% compared with 40%).
- 40,000 East Kent residents have no qualifications at all.

The proportion of working age residents with no qualifications is slightly higher in Swale and Thanet.

Young People: Following a period of contraction, the number of 15-19 year olds is expected to significantly increase over the next 5-7 years. By 2028 there will be around 20% more 15-19 year olds across Kent & Medway than now, an increase of nearly 10,000 potential students across East Kent, with the highest growth in Ashford.

The Local Skills Improvement Plan Trailblazer provides more information and can be found at <https://kentemployerskillsplan.org/resources/local-skills-improvement-plan-march-2022/>

Other useful reference documents include:

The Kent and Medway Workforce Skills Evidence Base <https://kentemployerskillsplan.org/resources/workforce-skills-evidence-base-2021/>

Key data and information about Kent as a whole can be found at <https://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/information-and-data/facts-and-figures-about-Kent/summary-of-kent-facts-and-figures#tab-1,2,3>

3. Meeting National, Regional and Local Needs

EKC Group already has a clear Strategic Plan, developed in consultation with our key stakeholders. We have ensured that the aims and objectives in this Accountability Plan align with our Strategic Plan. As a key anchor institution in East Kent, it is important to note that our Strategic Plan sets out a wider range of longer-term goals and objectives. These include goals and objectives related to our civic leadership responsibilities (for example sustainability), capital investment, and to establish the Group as an employer of choice. In developing the aims and objectives in this Accountability Plan (see Section 5. below), EKC Group has carefully considered national, regional and local priorities, particularly where these directly align.

Whilst EKC Group currently delivers a wide range of programmes in priority sectors, we know we need to do even more to meet rapidly changing and increasing needs. This includes the cross-cutting themes of decarbonisation and digitalisation identified in the Kent and Medway Workforce Skills Evidence Base and in the LSIP. The investment we are making in our capital resources will help to meet these needs, including our Strategic Development Fund project that will create two new Learning Centres to support engineering and manufacturing employers to decarbonise and embed this in our learning programmes.

The current work to identify skills needs in Kent and Medway does not identify specific occupational shortages and priorities, however where these are identified in the future through the LSIP, EKC Group will respond to meet these. For occupational shortages, this is particularly relevant to our Apprenticeships, Adult Education Budget, and National Skills Fund provision. We currently work directly with employers to identify and respond to specific occupational priorities, for example through our rail maintenance programme and our Apprenticeships programme.

Alongside skills and economic needs EKC Group also works to deliver against the needs of learners, such as students requiring courses below a traditional Level 2. The Group has already developed and is now implementing its two-year Level 2 to give greater life chances to learners upon completion and will seek to identify further developments that meet the needs of the learners and communities we serve.

EKC Group has also developed a specialisation plan for its Colleges for Level 3 and above that aligns its curriculum offer with the needs of its districts and boroughs, whilst ensuring that there are accessible progression pathways for students.

EKC Group will build on and integrate its existing strategic planning to ensure that it meets the new statutory duty to undertake regular reviews on how well our provision meets local needs. We will continue to work closely with the Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce, key employers, providers, and other stakeholders to fully involve them in the review process, whilst ensuring we align our provision with the LSIP and other identified needs. We are also developing a strong forum of East Kent anchor employer partners to provide ongoing insight, support and challenge to our existing provision

and future plans. All the above will enable EKC Group to combine ongoing dialogue, data sets, evidence bases, and the work of other partners in our reviews. This in turn will be reflected in the strategic aims and objectives of our accountability statements and longer-term Strategic Plan.

4. Key Stakeholders

From its formation, EKC Group has worked in a highly collaborative manner with its network of partners for the benefit of our communities. This has remained a core strength of the Group, with the development and consolidation of strategic partnerships with many organisations from a wide range of sectors and areas. In developing this Accountability Statement, we have consulted with key stakeholders, including Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce, local authorities, and the other two further education colleges in Kent.

The Group will continue to work closely with a range of key stakeholders to achieve its strategic objectives. These include:

- Kent County Council;
- District and Borough Councils;
- Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce;
- South East Local Enterprise Partnership;
- Strategically important employers;
- Strategically important third sector organisations;
- Business representative groups and networks;
- Government departments;
- Local MPs.

Engagement with Other Providers in the Area

EKC Group collaborates closely with the other two General Further Education Colleges in Kent and Medway, North Kent College and MidKent College. All three institutions are members of Kent Further Education, which is a pro-active partnership of FE Colleges that acts as a voice for the county's Further Education sector and to ensure it delivers the skills and training required. A recent example of this close collaboration includes two Strategic Development Fund (SDF) projects, focused on addressing the cross-sector themes of decarbonisation and digitalisation identified in the LSIP. In addition, there are a range of collaborative projects and events, including teaching and learning conferences and skills competitions. EKC Group also has a strong national reputation; it is a member of the Association of Colleges and the Collab Group of forward-thinking colleges working together to create solutions to economic and skills needs. EKC Group has recently been granted chartered status as a member of the Chartered Institute for Further Education, working alongside industry to shape and influence the national skills system, ensuring that skills providers are recognised as the key drivers of economic growth and development within their local communities.

EKC Group also works with other providers in the areas, including:

Schools – a selective education system operates in East Kent and every school has a sixth form, which has created a highly competitive environment. This system reduces schools' willingness to collaborate, however where possible we do work with schools, supporting them with the implementation of provider access legislation (the Baker Clause). This has included providing technical and vocational taster sessions and learning opportunities for pre-16s, as well as working with them to successfully transition learners into College.

Universities – we have an agreement with the University of Kent to deliver a small number of Higher Education programmes. We also work with the other East Kent-based institution, Canterbury Christ Church University. This includes

joint work on a skills and workforce development plan that helped to secure significant inward investment in Kent from a large employer.

Independent Training Providers – The Group has a clear policy to limit subcontracting wherever possible. However, we do work with private providers where we are unable to meet a specific local need. For example, we have been working with a range of community-based providers on key projects to meet local needs, such as the UK Community Renewal Fund and Community Learning.

5. Strategic Aims and Objectives

Aims and objectives	Contribution towards national, regional and local priorities for learning and skills
1. Ensure that 93% of students achieve a positive destination in 2023/24	Enable our students to succeed in their chosen technical and vocational programme and contribute to meeting the skills needs of East Kent
2. Ensure that all our 16-19 study programme students, over 6,000 in 2023/24, gain core transferable skills through a combination of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Social action - Industry placements - Embedded digital skills - Participation in skills competitions - A sustainability education programme 	Dedicated hours in our curriculum blueprint will develop core transferrable skills for all 16-19 students, which is a national priority. The LSIP also identified a need to invest in soft transferrable skills.

Aims and objectives	Contribution towards national, regional and local priorities for learning and skills
<p>3. Deliver National Skills Fund programmes to 70 learners in 2023/24, and deliver 30 Sector-based Work Academy Programmes (SWAPs) to 360 learners to meet the career aspirations of learners and the needs of employers</p>	<p>National Skills Fund - Adults will gain the skills they need to improve their job prospects and succeed in priority sectors, whilst supporting the economy</p> <p>SWAPs – Adults will gain the skills they need to gain employment in priority sectors by meeting employers’ workforce gaps</p>
<p>4. Develop and deliver 14 programmes to 310 adults, applying the new flexibility to use 3% of our Adult Education Budget to meet the emerging needs of employers</p>	<p>These programmes will meet the emerging needs of employers, including those identified in the LSIP for more flexible learning. This will include a campaign to improve digital skills across Kent, in collaboration with the two other Kent Colleges and Digital Kent.</p>
<p>5. Continue to implement our Apprenticeships roadmap by introducing five new standards in 2023/24:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Surveying Technician - Lead Engineering Maintenance Technician - Countryside Ranger - Landscape Supervisor - Healthcare Science Associate 	<p>Contribute to meeting specific sector and occupational needs that have been identified by employers</p>
<p>6. Continue to implement our specialisation plan, including new T Level Occupational Specialisms as they become available in the government rollout, with a target of delivering to an additional 84 students in 2023/24; building on the 14 Occupational Specialisms already</p>	<p>Continue to implement curriculum specialisation that meets national, regional and local needs</p>

Aims and objectives	Contribution towards national, regional and local priorities for learning and skills
introduced, with 319 students on existing Year 1 and 2 Programmes	
7. Build on the launch in 2022/23 of two new engineering centres in Ashford and Canterbury, and our extensive investment in Dover, to support employers to decarbonise and provide 500 students with skills in new technologies	Contribute to meeting the needs of a priority sector and a specific cross-cutting theme of decarbonisation / green skills identified in the LSIP and Kent and Medway Workforce Skills Evidence Base
8. In partnership with Kent County Council, develop three programmes to meet identified unmet needs of SEND learners in East Kent, including Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) difficulties	Contribute to social and economic inclusivity by supporting SEND learners into fulfilling careers, whilst meeting skills needs
9. Deliver skills provision to 250 offenders released on temporary licence in priority sectors	Contribute to the social and economic development of offenders, providing them with career opportunities whilst meeting skills needs
10. Deliver ESOL programmes to 200 adults in 2023/24 across our communities	Enable adults with little to no English language skills to fulfil their potential and increase their positive participation in their local area

6. Corporation Statement

On behalf of the EKC Group corporation, it is hereby confirmed that the plan as set out above reflects an agreed statement of purpose, aims and objectives as approved by the corporation at their meeting on 31st March 2023.

Charles Buchanan



Chair of Governors

Graham Razey



Chief Executive Officer

7. Relevant Supporting Documentation

[SELEP Skills Strategy](#)

[Kent and Medway Workforce Skills Evidence Base](#)

[LSIP](#)

[EKC Group Strategic Plan](#)

[EKC Group Curriculum 2030 Research](#)

[EKC Group Financial Statements](#)

[EKC Group Ofsted Inspection Reports](#)

[Pathways for All – Kent 16 to 19 Review](#)