



# Strategic Plan

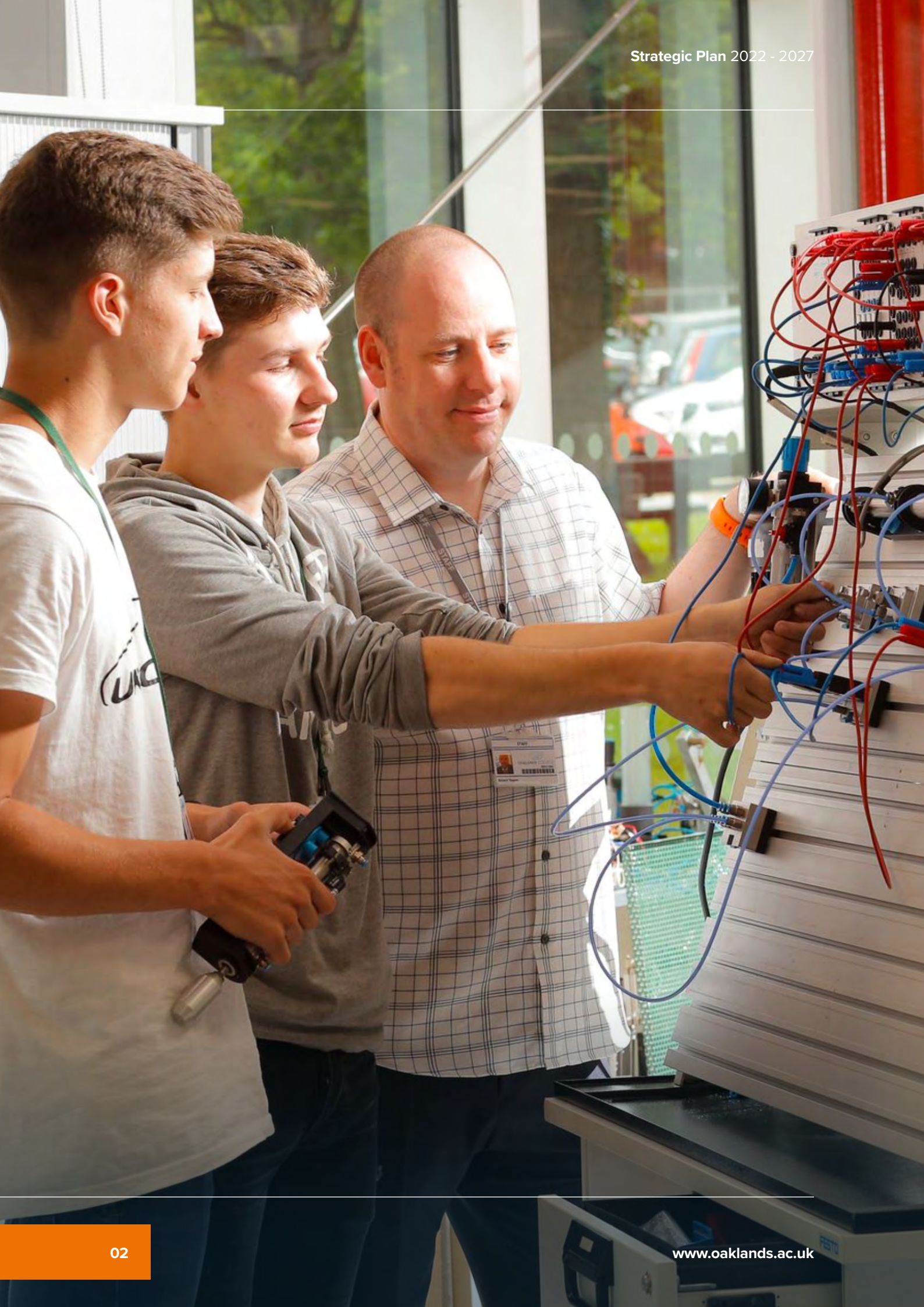
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OAKLANDS COLLEGE

[www.oaklands.ac.uk](http://www.oaklands.ac.uk)







# Foreword Chair of Governors

**It is my pleasure to introduce the Oaklands College Strategic Plan, which sets out our vision for the College for the period 2022-27.**



**Peter Thompson**  
Chair of Governors

The College has recently reached its centenary year, and this has given us an opportunity to reflect on past achievements, the changes that have taken place in our society over that period, and the important role that colleges continue to play in their local communities.

In more recent memory, the last few years have seen the country and the further education sector face some significant challenges. I want to take this opportunity to place on record how grateful the Corporation are to all staff for their hard work in ensuring the College has been able to continue to provide the services that our communities depend upon.

While the legacy of the last 100 years gives us much to be proud of, we have no intention of resting on our laurels. This strategy sets out our aims and ambitions as we embark on what could be considered a new chapter for the College. These aims and ambitions can be summarised by our new mission statement, which is to: 'Prepare every learner for work, a rewarding career and life's opportunities'.

One further aspect of the strategy that I think it is worth highlighting at the outset are our four cross cutting themes, which will be integral to all we undertake and at the very heart of what we want the College to be about. These are:

- Our commitment to sustainability and the environment
- Our commitment to the happiness and wellbeing of our College community
- Our commitment to digital transformation
- Our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusivity

Whether you are a student, staff member, local employer, or any of our other valued stakeholders, we look forward to working with you to achieve this strategy – shaping futures and transforming lives. Here's to the next 100 years!

# Foreword

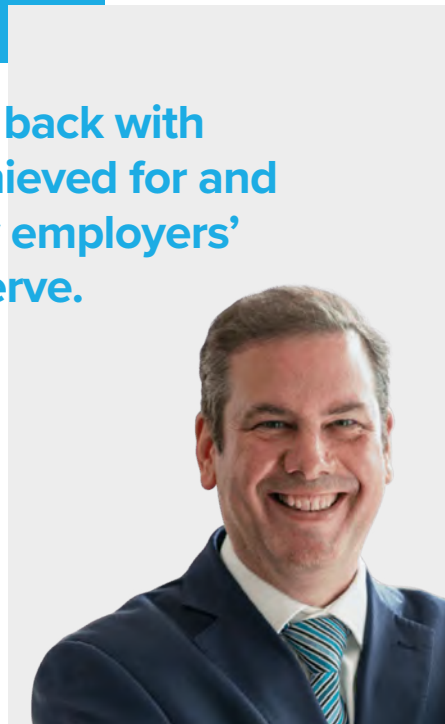
## Andrew Slade

**In our 100th year, Oaklands can look back with enormous pride at what we have achieved for and with our learners, staff and the many employers' communities and stakeholders we serve.**

We also look forward, with confidence and optimism, at what we will do for our many stakeholders throughout our next century.

Oaklands has a long proud heritage in providing responsive, transformational education, tracing our roots back to when we opened our doors to both men and women on an equal basis in 1921. Throughout our history, we have challenged and supported our students providing them with the knowledge and skills to achieve their individual ambitions and dreams so they can make their own contributions to their communities. Oaklands has always expected the best for, and from its students.

Whilst the operating environment for Further Education remains as challenging as ever, Oaklands has a history of rising to such challenges, seizing opportunities and empowering our stakeholders to do the same. For a century our adaptability, flexibility and community responsiveness have contributed to the college's success. These remain the qualities we continue to demonstrate, and instil in others, to face our shared future. This strategic plan developed at the start of a new Millennia for us sets out the direction of travel to achieve all of the ambition for our learners, staff and stakeholders.



**Andrew Slade**

*Principal and Chief Executive*







# Looking to the Next Phase of our Transformational Education

**Oaklands remains true to our proud origins as a contemporary college community, looking forward, adapting, and innovating, whilst ensuring each one of our 7,500+ students is treated and respected as an individual.**

Students have access to over 1,500 full and part-time courses delivered across Oaklands three campuses, covering a wide spectrum of subjects, sectors and industries. We are nationally renowned for our sports academies where sporting and academic excellence are given equal importance. Many of our alumni go on to compete globally and/or continue their sport and education in top US universities.

Oaklands remains an ambitious institution, developing additional centres of excellence including SEND provision Engineering, Care, Early Years, Agritech and Creative Industries.



As we begin our next 100 years, Oaklands is ideally placed to respond to current challenges and opportunities, including the need for a high quality, career-focused further education system. We are well placed to move from being a locally significant and valued learning community to one which is recognised at wider regional and national levels, with the potential to make an international contribution to an outward-looking and outward-reaching global Britain.



Throughout the period covered by this strategic plan, we will become the destination of choice for an expanded and diversified offer to a larger number of students. In addition to the strengths of our expanding 16-19 curriculum, we will meet the skills needs of many more adults and extend the range of opportunities into higher levels of study as well as lower levels which have excellent progression pathways.



We will follow national education and skills policies to break down the artificial barriers between learning traditionally referred to as 'academic' and 'vocational' whilst promoting parity of esteem across all pathways.

In doing these things, we will grow our student income across all of our provision, and through strategic partnerships we will ensure mutual benefit and long-term, sustainable relationships. We will become a highly respected and aspirational brand that stands for innovation, integrity and collaboration. We will achieve excellence through the quality of Oaklands refreshed offer, our expanded estate and enhanced facilities. Our strong values and ethical approach will be a beacon of best practice in sustainability, SMART digital technology and mental health and wellbeing. In all this, we will remain true to our origins as a welcoming, inclusive learning community, providing career-changing education, that supports progression opportunities for our students to high quality destinations. To achieve this, we will work with our partners, employers and stakeholder groups to ensure we are co-developing and co-creating the required educational programmes and services.



# Our Oaklands Community

**Oaklands is a complex and vibrant community, with teaching, learning and assessment at our heart and forming our core business. Education and skills unite individuals; they give all learners and teachers a shared purpose and a common goal.**

The outcomes we secure with and for our students improve life chances and change lives for the better. Quality outcomes depend on the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, as well as the support provided for those activities. Central to all our planning is delivering the very best teaching learning and support.

Our approach to teaching, learning and assessment will continue to be characterised by:

- Teachers who use their great subject expertise and strong grasp of the skilled craft of teaching to provide outstanding learning opportunities - being innovative to maximise learner potential
- Teachers who have a holistic understanding of the individual learner and their needs
- Teachers who understand well the demands of the specifications and assessments learners are working towards and who prepare them to achieve to their fullest potential, gaining the qualifications they need to progress to the next stage of study or employment
- Learners who enjoy their learning and the learning environment
- Learners who work in strong partnership with teachers and fellow students as part of a mutually respectful, supportive community of learning

Our approach to learner support is to guarantee that all learners are fully accepted for who they are and fully supported to become what they want to become.

Our support for staff is rooted in the shared understanding that our people are Oaklands' most valuable resource and that teaching and supporting students are demanding and rewarding professions whose practitioners need to be enabled to develop their own skills and knowledge continuously.







Our commitment to lifelong learning as a college is something we practice ourselves as staff through all roles across the organisation. Advances in knowledge and technology, including the technologies which support teaching and learning, create for all Oaklands staff a dynamic environment, one which embraces change, new challenges and new opportunities.





## National Context

**For the past two years and more our College, our communities, the UK and the wider world have been in the grip of a pandemic from which we are still emerging.**

As we move forward, we must do so in an environment where the pandemic has produced social and economic harm, with adverse impacts on physical and mental health, and an adverse educational impact over a number of years on adults and particularly young people. This means there has been a loss in





learning and the acquisition of skills and knowledge expected over the last two years.

Much of the operating environment of further education - the employment landscape, working practices, studying methods - has changed significantly and many of the changes will have longer-term effects.

The pressure on public finances will restrict future investment in education; further education has already been the sector most affected by the austerity measures of the past decade. However, inequalities and opportunity gaps, which further education is so committed to and adept at addressing, have also been exacerbated by the pandemic.

The relevance, levels and availability of home-grown skills post-Brexit are another major challenge identified by many businesses and employers, but there is a growing consensus now that further education has the key

role to play in addressing skills shortages and gaps. It can do so across the whole post-16 age range and at all levels, including a greater role in higher level skills.

Additionally, the imperatives of climate change and the range of climate commitments made by the UK government prioritise new green technologies and with them the skills and knowledge that they require.

The **Skills for Jobs White Paper** leading to the **Skills and Post 16 Education Act 2022** heralds both important opportunities and obligations for FE. The policy commitments are to ensure that there is “*Lifelong Learning for Opportunity and Growth*”, the realising of higher technical qualifications, and preparing young people for a portfolio/digital career. This aligns entirely with our mission, as does the government’s determination to “*prioritise the courses and qualifications that enable people to get great jobs*”. However, while this major policy statement identifies the preeminent role of FE in delivering the skills essential to economic growth, it also makes clear what Oaklands has always believed, “*that further education and training are equally about fulfilment and enrichment on a personal level*”.

More recently this agenda for FE has been set in the wider policy context of ‘Levelling Up’. Levelling Up is defined as “*giving everyone and everywhere the opportunity to flourish*”; Oaklands is, and will continue to be, at the forefront of turning those ambitions into reality.

The national policy environment reflects all these challenges and increasingly looks to colleges of further education such as Oaklands to address them. This strategy places great emphasis in positioning the College to be **internationally known, nationally recognised, regionally relevant, and locally significant** ambitious at reaching a greater number of individuals, businesses and stakeholders to grow its offer to meet economic and social needs.

# Regional & Local Contexts

**The communities our College serves and the partners we engage with are a rich and complex mix; they include learners at all levels of learning and stages in their lives, their families, other local education providers, local government, other public services in health and social care, and a very wide range of local employers and businesses through our work-based and employment-facing learning.**



Our existing focus on employer engagement will become stronger still as FE's natural affinity with employers and with the complex, changing world of work receives fresh support, encouragement and investment.

Oaklands prepares and empowers people for employment opportunities not just locally and regionally but nationally and internationally. At Oaklands, there is particularly strong engagement with employers in our local and regional communities.

We align both our curriculum offer and our wider support to learners with the aims and priorities of Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership, its sub-boards, and its Skills and Employment Strategy. Identified regional priority and growth sectors include Science and Technology, Creative, Business, Engineering, Construction and Health and Social Care.

Encouraging greater numbers to access the 16+ education and skills training pathways delivered by FE coincides with an added growth opportunity for Oaklands with the demographic upturn of the local 16-19 age group. We have both the estate capacity and expanding high quality facilities to accommodate this growth. We are determined to work with local partners to ensure that the availability and cost of travel to outstanding opportunities present no obstacles to our learners. We are determined to seize opportunities for co-investment and partnerships to deliver future skills needs and enhance life chances.





As importantly, in an employment landscape that changes so fast, Oaklands is committed to equipping our learners with flexible and transferable skills required for new emerging opportunities locally, prioritising those identified in the Hertfordshire Skills Framework as the skills most valued by employers.



# Strategic Plan Overview



## Learners, Staff, Employer & Stakeholders

1. Shaping Futures,  
Transforming Lives

## Supporting Policies, Procedures & Strategies

1. Curriculum Strategy
2. Estates Strategy
3. People Strategy
4. Financial Plan

## Annual Operating Plan

1. Delivering Oaklands'  
Strategic Objectives

## Themes

1. Sustainability and Environment
2. Happiness and Wellbeing
3. Digital Transformation
4. Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity

## Aims (Objectives)

1. Outstanding Teaching, Learning and Assessment
2. Beneficial Partnerships
3. Sustainable SMART Campuses
4. Inclusive, Thriving Community
5. Financial Sustainability

## Values

1. Excellence and Innovation
2. Collaborative Learning
3. Inclusion and Happiness
4. Integrity and Accountability

## Mission & Vision

1. Prepare every learner for work, a rewarding career and life's opportunities
2. By 2027 we will be; a sustainable educational trailblazer inspiring learners and our community to achieve their potential in a changing world!

# Purpose, Vision, Mission, Values & Themes



**The purpose of the strategic plan is to set overall aims for the College and the direction to achieve them, supported by an annual operating plan.**

Purpose





# Vision

**By 2027 we will be:**  
**A sustainable educational trailblazer inspiring our learners and our wider community to achieve their potential in a changing world!**

This vision will realise our **aspirational goals** which are to achieve by 26/27:

- An increase in income by 20% to £40m, learner numbers to 10,000+ and sustain good or better financial health
  - Increase 16-18 learners to 3,670 and income by £2.7m
  - Increase adult learners to 5,000 and income by £2m
  - Increase commercial income by £3m
  - Increase HE learners to 571 and income by £2m
  - Divest up to £1.5m of apprenticeship income and replace with relevant employer provision
- Grow training provision and services to employers by 50%
- Maximise the commercial opportunities of the Oaklands estate
- Develop strategic partnerships with Hertfordshire County Council, the Local Enterprise Partnership, our District Councils, the University of Hertfordshire and the three Hertfordshire Colleges
- Achieve a carbon neutral estate by 2050, realising a 15% reduction by 2027
- Gain an Ofsted Grade 2 or better
- Complete the current estates capital programme on time
- Be an employer of choice with high levels of staff satisfaction
- Develop our brand identity and impact in the marketplace
- Ensure students' satisfaction and attainment rates are in the top quartile of Colleges
- Ensure students undergo high quality, meaningful experiences in the world of work
- Ensure students have access to high-quality blended learning
- Achieve a reputation for technological innovation



**“Prepare every learner for work,  
a rewarding career and life’s  
opportunities.**

***By treating every student as the  
individual they are, with care,  
passion and understanding in a  
professional, contemporary and  
community-focused environment  
they’ll value and enjoy.”***

# Mission





# *Shaping futures, transforming lives*

## Values

**As a College we are committed to:**

**1**

### **Excellence and Innovation**

Deliver outstanding results,  
sustainable careers and future leaders

**3**

### **Inclusion and Happiness**

Celebrate the achievements and  
successes of all our communities

**2**

### **Collaborative Learning**

Develop your knowledge and skills  
to prepare you for life and work

**4**

### **Integrity and Accountability**

Striving for the best in all we do



# Themes



## Our Cross Cutting Themes

In the daily life and work of Oaklands College there are embedded underlying principles which are encapsulated in four cross-cutting themes that underpin our thinking and practice:

### Our commitment to sustainability and the environment

We commit to:

1

- Promoting **energy efficiency** and clean energy sources
- **Eliminating waste** and pollution, recycling wherever possible
- **Partnering with sustainable companies** and organisations
- Promoting **sustainability through the curriculum**, through teaching and learning, and through staff development
- Providing the **skills and knowledge** which a green industrial revolution requires
- Co-creating **new provision** that enables people to gain jobs in the green/sustainable economy
- Creating **world class estates and facilities** which are recognised in terms of their quality, sustainability and their promotion and practice of evolving leading-edge technologies

### Our commitment to the happiness and wellbeing of our College community

We commit to:

2

- Delivering effective **mental health and wellbeing support** services to students and staff
- Evaluating our support in these areas using an **evidence-based approach**
- Working in **collaborative partnerships** with others to promote mental health and wellbeing and to deliver support
- **Promoting positive mental health** behaviours and an inclusive culture which encourages early intervention and reduces stigma
- Creating an **inclusive, supportive, thriving college** community, one committed to the health, wellbeing and success of all who work and study there by developing and implementing strategies to support all the College community

## Our commitment to Digital Transformation

We commit to:

3

- Using existing and emerging digital technologies and electronic platforms to enhance the ways we collect and **use data to make informed decisions** and improve the quality of services, experiences and outcomes for all our stakeholders – learners, families, staff, businesses
- Using digital transformation to **improve operational efficiency**, enhance internal processes, reduce costs, and eliminate waste
- Increasing the speed and **quality of our service** to all stakeholders
- **Digital transformation**, which is not just about technological change in itself, but about people change, process change, pedagogical change, digitised facilities and estates, as well as organisational leadership and management change at all levels
- A fully digitally collaborative and connected College campus and community
- Embedding industry leading standards to support the future of digital education

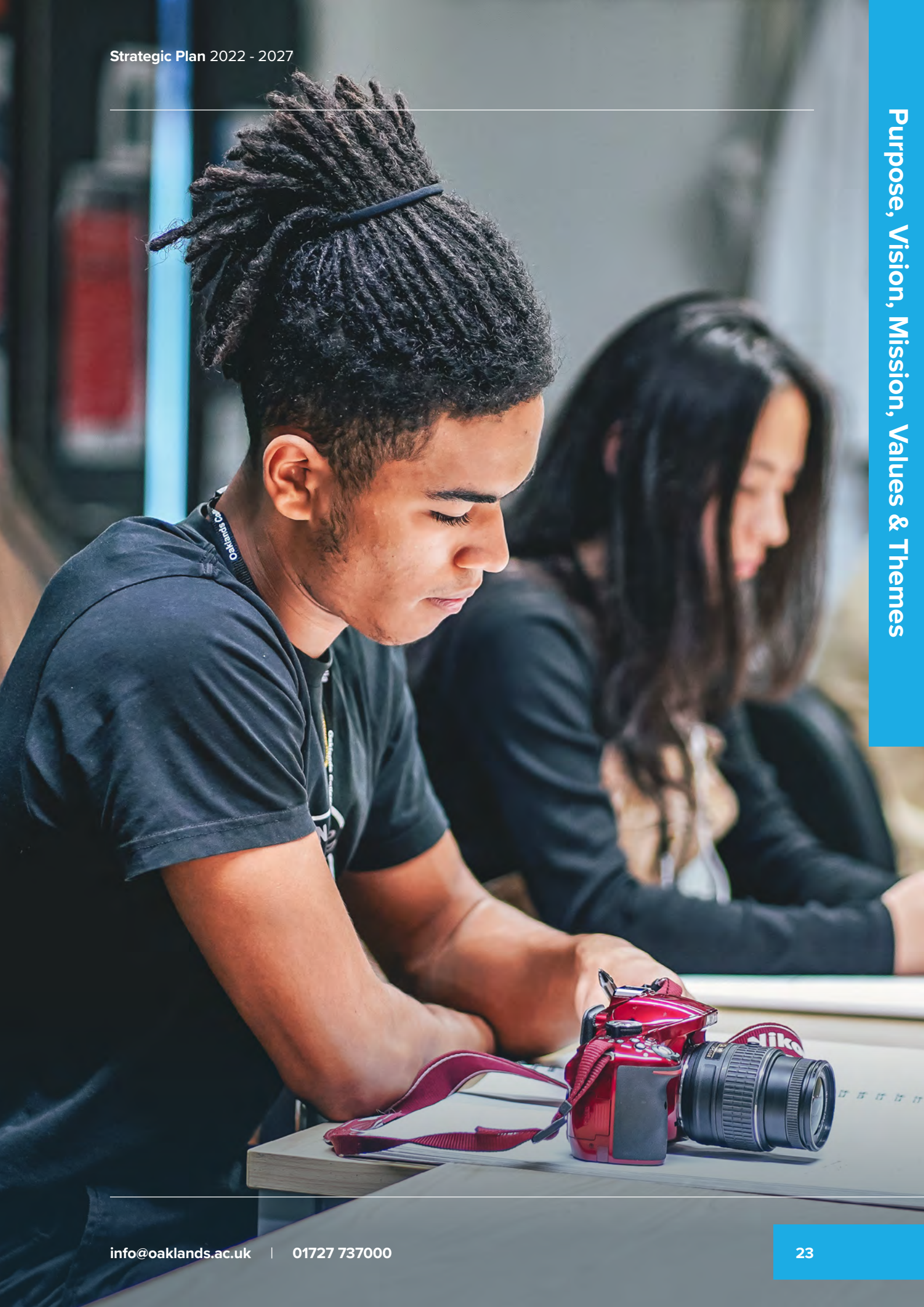
## Our commitment to equality, diversity and inclusivity

We commit to:

4

- Ensuring the principles of equality, diversity and inclusivity are **embedded in all policies, systems and practices**, so no one is unfairly disadvantaged or discriminated against
- Creating an environment which **values differences**, raises aspiration and provides an opportunity for everyone to achieve where all students, staff, governors, visitors, contractors and stakeholders are welcomed and treated with respect regardless of their disability, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, religion, sexual orientation, or social background
- **Valuing the different contributions** made by students and staff and make use of their diverse backgrounds and experiences to enhance our learning community and to promote a culture of mutual respect and understanding
- Encouraging and **fostering good relationships and understanding** between people from different groups and backgrounds to address unconscious bias because we believe that diversity is a strength and something that should be respected and celebrated by all those who learn, teach and visit here
- Actively **encouraging diverse recruitment practices** for staff and learners from all groups within the communities we serve
- **Taking positive action** to promote and ensure there is equality of outcomes for all students and staff we will regularly consult with students, staff, governors and key partners











# Our Curriculum Intent

## Learners are the centre of our universe

The curriculum at Oaklands College is ambitious and accessible, responsive both to individual ambitions of learners and the needs of the communities we serve, supporting students to overcome barriers whilst providing the relevant learning and skills required to realise their full potential - supporting them towards future sustainable careers.

- We ensure **equal access** to learners at all stages of their lives to ensure they are on the right course with the right support to excel in their chosen programme of study
- We are **ambitious** for our learners at all ages and stages of their learning; we offer more than a qualification, providing the wider knowledge and experience so that learners progress to positive next steps
- The curriculum is structured to enable students to **attain relevant and valued qualifications and skills** to realise their full potential and to maximise their progression
- The curriculum offer is kept under review to allow us to **respond to new and emerging needs** identified by our stakeholders and government educational policy
- A student's next step is at the heart of what we do, through support and empowerment, and by **raising aspirations**, thereby providing a clear route to chosen career opportunities



# Aims

## Strategic Aims & Objectives

Through the execution of our 2022 – 2027 Strategic Plan, we will achieve the following strategic aims and objectives, which have key actions set out in our annual operating plan.

# 1

Deliver continuous **outstanding teaching, learning, and assessment** to all learners and employers.



# 2

Create mutually **beneficial partnerships** to deliver the highest quality educational offer to increase economic prosperity.



# 3

Create our estate so that it is recognised as world class in terms of quality, **sustainability** and the promotion and practice of evolving leading-edge technologies.



# 4

Create a caring, accessible, **inclusive, and thriving college community**, committed to fairness, health, and success.



# 5

Deliver good or outstanding long term **sustainable financial health**, through growth, that enables reinvestment in our students, staff, and estate to support our aspirational goals.





# Objectives



1. Deliver **outstanding teaching, learning, assessment and enrichment** providing an environment that builds skills and knowledge
2. **Inspire our learners** to attend, learn and achieve above the national quartile
3. Drive a professional culture of **continuous improvement** through high quality training, coaching and performance management to sustain outstanding quality of education
4. Achieve high levels of **satisfaction** among all key stakeholders to raise the College's profile



1. Develop **Centres of Excellence** with key partners that are locally and regionally relevant and recognised nationally and internationally
2. Continually develop our curriculum strategy to **meet employment and economic priorities** by increasing participation in education and skills to progress people into or within work
3. Establish ourselves as a **collaborative** College that increases its number of strategic partners to develop skills, promote productivity and prosperity in the region
4. Establish a **strong and respected brand** that listens and responds to all its stakeholders



1. Deliver the College estate masterplan and strategy to **maximise our assets** to the benefit of our stakeholders, ensuring they meet our 7 S design principles:  
- Smart, Sustainable, Safe, Sector employer engaged so that developments have relevant industry input and support, Stakeholder engaged, Strategic, Social corporate responsibility
2. Create a **digitally SMART campus** through embracing current and future technologies and industry best practice.
3. Effectively manage the estate to model best practice of **regulatory compliance**
4. Create a **carbon neutral estate** by 2050 realising 15% of this by 2027



1. A College that is at the forefront of, and leading in **Equality, Diversity, and Inclusivity** by embedding effective practices in all we do
2. Nationally accredited as an **employer of choice** that promotes a consistent culture of trust, innovation, enterprise, and teamwork, where both staff and students feel valued and recognised.
3. Renowned for delivering a **safe and secure** environment that allows learners to thrive
4. Delivering **more than just a qualification**, through enrichment and work experience activities that develops a portfolio of skills learners require to progress to their chosen destination



1. Deliver an **annual positive College contribution** generating cash for future investments through growth and financial prudence
2. Maintain a **financially viable curriculum** offer with increasing learner numbers that allows for cost effective delivery and value for money
3. Ensure we have constant access to **effective data sources and management information** to enable swift and evidence-based decision making
4. Maintain effective management and control as well as **audit compliance** to meet regulatory requirements

