



Oakswood College

Empowering Through Education



Access and Participation

Statement

PROMOTING EXCELLENCE • ENSURING COMPLIANCE
SUPPORTING OUR COMMUNITY



GOVERNANCE



QUALITY



COMPLIANCE



EXCELLENCE



Oakwood College
Empowering Through Education
(Trading name of Oakwood Group Ltd)

Access and Participation Statement

2026-27

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Documentation that informs this Access & Participation Statement:

- [OfS Equality of Opportunity Risk Register \(EORR\) and guidance](#)
- [OfS Regulatory Advice 6: How to Prepare your Access & Participation Plan Guidance](#)
- HEPI Policy Note 70: Scaling Opportunities (2026)
- [KPMG Evaluation of Education & Employer Partnerships Final Report \(2010\)](#)
- [British Medical Journal Article: What factors facilitate partnerships between higher education and local mental health services for students? \(2023\)](#)
- [HEPI article: Empowering Mature Students Through Inclusive AI Literacy Advancing Equity and Social Justice in Higher Education \(2025\)](#)
- [HEPI report: Making a Success of Employer-Sponsored Education \(2016\)](#)
- [HEPI article: The Success of the Access to HE Students is an Example of Widening Participation in Action \(2019\)](#)

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1. Introduction & Strategic Overview

Mission and Vision

Oakwood College's **mission** is to create a successful learning community which promotes a purposeful and inclusive ethos of achievement and improvement with a strong commitment to equality of opportunity, mutual respect and individual and collective ambition for its students and staff. As John Hayes wrote in his [2019 HEPI article](#), "[...] we should recognise that rather than making people 'fit' university life we must enable more institutions to 'fit' the circumstances of many more potential learners. Flexible provision should be tailored to what Edmund Burke evocatively described as the 'crooked timber of humanity'".

The approach described by Hayes is one that Oakwood College embraces and seeks to apply in practice. Our **vision** is to benefit the Oakwood College learning community by:

- Delivering flexible, inclusive, and employer-informed education.
- Providing a student experience that recognises the individual and tailors support and guidance accordingly.
- Building a vibrant community that widens participation and enhances student outcomes.
- Improving absolute outcomes for all students while addressing disparities between different groups.

APS Delivery & Implementation Plan and KPI Assurance Framework

To support the College in progressing, monitoring and delivering the commitments set out in this Access & Participation Statement, two documents accompany the Statement:

- APS Delivery & Implementation Plan (2026-27), which sets out a summary of the College's APS priorities, interventions and oversight responsibilities, and the actions that will be taken to achieve these objectives;
- The KPI Assurance Framework sets out the metrics, performance indicators, thresholds, and escalation arrangements used to monitor delivery of the APS Delivery & Implementation Plan.

Oakwood College's Commitment to the Access and Participation Plan of Buckinghamshire New University

Oakwood College recognises the importance of promoting access, success, and progression for underrepresented groups in higher education in the UK, and indeed, this is fundamental to our institutional mission. Whilst wholly owned by Oakwood College and aligned with our own institutional objectives, this Access and Participation Statement is designed to complement and support the objectives of Buckinghamshire New University's Access and

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Participation Plan within the context of partnership delivery, alongside also articulating the College's own institutional priorities. In particular, Oakwood College's access and participation commitments share alignment with the following BNU key APP targets relating to:

- increasing access for students from low participation neighbourhoods (POLAR4 Q1) and lower socioeconomic backgrounds;
- improving disclosure and support for students with disabilities, care leavers and other vulnerable groups;
- and addressing underrepresentation among specific communities including young carers and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller students.

In addition, Oakwood's access and participation commitments contribute to BNU's strategic focus on eliminating gaps in continuation, completion and degree outcomes for Black, Asian and minoritised ethnic groups, as well as for students from disadvantaged backgrounds and mature learners. Our approach also supports BNU's objective of improving overall student success and graduate outcomes across the student lifecycle, including within partnership delivery.

While aligned to these priorities, Oakwood's commitments are institutionally owned and informed by our local context, mission and student demographics, ensuring that delivery is both strategically coherent with BNU and responsive to the needs of our immediate community. As a small institution, Oakwood College seeks to provide a personalised and responsive student experience supported by integrated academic and pastoral support structures.

For the purposes of this Statement, references to 'access, success and progression' are aligned with the definitions set out in the Office for Students' Conditions A2 and B3 and respective guidance. Additionally, the OfS' Equality of Opportunity Risk Register (EORR) is a key point of reference that informs this Statement.

Although this document is structured as an Access & Participation Statement rather than a formal Access & Participation Plan, it has been informed by relevant OfS guidance, sector evidence, and research relating to equality of opportunity, student outcomes, widening participation, and progression. The College has considered evidence relating to employer engagement, mature learners, local partnerships, student wellbeing, and progression outcomes to ensure that this Statement is evidence-informed and proportionate to institutional context.

2. Institutional Context and Student Body

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Oakswood College seeks to support a diverse student population, based on local demographic analysis and institutional mission, Oakswood College anticipates particular focus on:

- mature learners returning to education
- students from low participation neighbourhoods
- first-generation higher education students
- students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds
- Black, Asian and minoritised ethnic communities
- students requiring flexible or non-traditional routes into higher education

Institutional monitoring and annual review processes will continue to refine identification of groups experiencing differential outcomes or barriers to participation.

3. Equality of Opportunity Risk Register (EORR) and Local Demographic Analysis

Oakswood College has used available local demographic and labour market data to inform this statement, including Birmingham City Council profiles, ONS census data, and the West Midlands Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP). This ensures our approach reflects local participation needs and regional skills priorities.

This Access & Participation Statement is informed by the following:

- Birmingham local authority data, with emphasis on Birmingham Edgbaston & central wards
- West Midlands & Warwickshire Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) 2023 and Stage 2 Progress Report 2024–25
- Local postcode-level profiles for B16 8TP (Ladywood Ward)

The geographical scope of this evaluation covers an approximate five-mile radius and includes Birmingham city centre, Ladywood, Edgbaston, parts of Harborne, Handsworth, Smethwick, and parts of Sandwell.

This analysis is used to inform a proportionate understanding of potential risks relating to access, participation, and student outcomes within the College's local higher education context. Oakswood College has evaluated its institutional position through the lens of the OfS Equality of Opportunity Risk Register (EORR), alongside local demographic and socioeconomic data.

In summary, the area in which Oakswood College is located is predominantly young, highly diverse and relatively deprived. It sits in a high-rental, inner-city corridor with high

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proportions of privately rented flats and a relatively high Index of Multiple Deprivation ranking. The College's postcode (B16 8TP) sits in an area with above-average deprivation, indicative ONS/LSOA analysis suggests that the College's local area falls within higher deprivation deciles nationally according to IMD indicators and estimated household income levels below national averages.

Our ward (Ladywood) and those nearby (Soho & Victoria, Handsworth) are ranked in the most deprived deciles nationally for income, employment and education indicators (LSOA-level IMD scores from Birmingham City Council and ONS).

Key findings relative to the OfS EORR are as follows:

AGE	Young: Birmingham's median age is 32 (vs 40 for England)
ETHNICITY	48.6% White, 11% Black and significant Asian and Mixed communities; many wards around the city centre are majority-minority.
GENDER	According to the 2021 Census, the gender split is relatively even with a slightly higher proportion of female (51%) to male (49%) residents.
EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT	<p>Birmingham has:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • below-average levels of Level 3+ qualification • notable pockets of very low skills, alongside university-qualified graduates struggling to access higher-level jobs locally. <p>Priority needs locally are identified as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level 2 and 3 progression • adult reskilling for changing industries • ESOL, and • employer-linked technical pathways (apprenticeships and HTQs).
EMPLOYMENT AND ECONOMIC ACTIVITY	<p>West Midlands LSIP highlights acute shortages in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • digital & technology; • advanced manufacturing & engineering; • construction & retrofit; • health & social care; • logistics, business & professional services, and • green skills. <p>In addition, it is identified that there are persistent basic skills gaps in the following core skills: literacy, numeracy and digital.</p> <p>Employer engagement with providers has historically been low (around 74% of regional employers had no engagement with post-16 providers over the last 5 years), but appetite to engage is now high.</p>

4. Demographic Analysis of Ladywood Ward, Birmingham

Oakswood College is located at Tricorn House, 51–53 Hagley Road, Birmingham B16 8TP which falls within the Ladywood ward of Birmingham City Council. Ladywood Ward is the third most populous ward in Birmingham and is an urban ward in the Edgbaston area of central/northwest Birmingham. It is known for its diverse population and proximity to the city centre, and this means that our immediate catchment area naturally lends itself not only to a student population who are extremely local to Oakswood College, but also, we are relatively easy to access on public transport from surrounding Birmingham wards. We recognise that public transport access is a key consideration for many of our enrolled and prospective students, and our accessibility in this regard is a key factor in being a realistic prospect for potential students for whom transport can be a significant barrier.

Notwithstanding the diversity of its population, Ladywood Ward is less representative of Birmingham overall because it is significantly younger, more urban, more diverse and more deprived than the city average. It comprises most of Birmingham city centre. Ladywood also shares some demographic characteristics with other Birmingham wards, including comparable patterns relating to gender distribution, religion, and unemployment.

Key differences include Ladywood being:

- more diverse (77% vs 51% Black, Asian and minoritised ethnic groups)
- younger (with students forming a key proportion of the local population, and younger people living in city centre flats)
- more deprived (IMD top 10% most deprived nationally), and
- denser than Birmingham’s suburban average

Ladywood therefore reflects Birmingham City’s growth areas (diversity, urban youth) however it amplifies city challenges (deprivation, underrepresentation in HE). Accordingly, although we are accessible from various areas of Birmingham, in acknowledgement of our immediate local population and for the purposes of our strategic planning (as necessary and strategically appropriate) including the scope of activities covered in this Access & Participation Statement, Ladywood Ward forms a key part of Oakswood College’s immediate catchment area and will be a primary focus for outreach and engagement activity, alongside wider Birmingham and West Midlands communities. The data in Section 3 of this Access & Participation Statement regarding Ladywood Ward is taken from [Birmingham City Council’s Ladywood Ward Factsheet](#) and informed by the 2021 National Census).

5. Access and Participation Objectives

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Further to our EORR evaluation and findings as set out above, and in alignment with the partner university expectations and sector access and participation principles, our key objectives are aligned with OfS conditions of registration and expectations relating to access and participation outcomes, including B3 (outcomes monitoring) where applicable. As B3 data becomes available through regulatory return processes, we will use available B3-related outcomes data, where applicable, alongside internal monitoring data for measuring progress and monitoring the success of our key objectives (see also Section 8 of this Statement 'Governance and Oversight').

Access

- Engage with local institutions, colleges, and community organisations to raise awareness of higher education opportunities.
- Develop outreach programmes targeting mature learners and Black, Asian and minoritised ethnic groups.
- Offer flexible entry routes such as foundation years and Level 4/5 qualifications where applicable.
- Recognise prior learning where applicable and appropriately mapped.

Supporting Applicant Preparedness

In line with internal quality processes around transparency and student decision-making, we place a strong emphasis on helping applicants understand the nature and demands of HE study. This ensures that students enter HE with realistic expectations and the skills needed to succeed.

Information, Advice & Guidance (IAG)

Further to our obligations under consumer law and in accordance with our Information, Advice & Guidance Policy, we provide clear, accessible, and timely information about:

- Course content and structure
- Entry requirements and contextual admissions
- Learning, teaching, and assessment methods
- Support services and financial considerations
- Progression routes and career opportunities

This enables applicants to make informed choices and assess their own readiness for HE.

Pre-entry and Transition Support

To support preparedness, we offer:

- Taster sessions and sample teaching

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- Academic skills workshops (e.g., writing, research, digital literacy)
- One-to-one guidance and personalised discussions
- Opportunities to meet staff and current HE students
- Campus visits and orientation activities

These interventions help applicants understand the expectations of HE and build confidence before enrolment.

Inclusive Admissions

Our admissions approach is designed to recognise potential and mitigate disadvantage. We use:

- Contextual information
- Recognition of prior learning and experience
- Flexible entry routes
- Support for applicants who may need additional guidance

This ensures that admissions decisions are fair, inclusive, and aligned with OfS principles.

Success

Oakswood College's approach to student success is designed to identify and progressively reduce continuation and attainment gaps between widening participation and non-widening participation students over time through targeted interventions. This approach is grounded in evidence from the OfS Equality of Opportunity Risk Register (EORR), local demographic analysis, and ongoing institutional monitoring.

Outcome Commitments

The College monitors and seeks to reduce gaps in:

- Continuation rates between underrepresented groups and the overall student body
- Module and programme attainment outcomes across demographic groups
- Completion and award rates for non-traditional and widening participation learners

Progress against these indicators will be tracked annually and reviewed through governance structures. As a developing higher education provider, Oakswood College recognises that some institutional outcome datasets remain in an early stage of development. Initial baseline measures will therefore be established using:

- ❖ 2025/26 institutional admissions and student outcome data
- ❖ partner university reporting where applicable
- ❖ internal continuation, engagement and attainment monitoring

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- ❖ widening participation profile analysis of enrolled cohorts

The College will use these baseline measures to establish measurable improvement targets and evaluate progress over subsequent annual review cycles.

We recognise that students from low participation neighbourhoods, lower socioeconomic backgrounds, mature learners, and students from Black, Asian and minoritised ethnic groups are at higher statistical risk of non-continuation and lower attainment. The College's strategy addresses this through three core priorities:

1. Early identification of risk
2. Targeted interventions
3. Sustained academic and pastoral support

Targeted Academic Support

Academic success is supported through a structured intervention model:

- Each student is assigned a personal tutor, with enhanced monitoring for those identified as at risk of non-continuation or underperformance
- Academic skills provision is embedded and targeted at key risk areas including writing, critical thinking, research skills, and digital literacy
- Formative assessment points are used to identify attainment gaps early and enable timely intervention
- The Support Through Studies Policy integrates academic and pastoral support to ensure clarity, coordination, and accountability

Retention and Engagement Strategy

Retention activity is based on proactive identification and intervention:

- A structured engagement monitoring system identifies patterns of absence, disengagement, or declining performance
- Targeted support pathways are provided for mature learners, part-time students, and non-traditional entrants
- Peer support, mentoring, and structured learning communities support academic integration and belonging during transition into higher education
- Support is tailored to individual need, with flexible arrangements where required to support continuation and success

Where engagement falls below defined thresholds, students are contacted within set timeframes and offered targeted support through personal tutors and programme teams.

Wellbeing and Financial Stability

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Recognising the link between wellbeing, finance, and retention:

- Integrated wellbeing services provide mental health support, financial guidance, and hardship assistance
- Dedicated support is provided for care-experienced and estranged students, including pastoral, financial, and academic planning support
- Financial barriers are addressed through bursaries, hardship funds, and structured financial advice

Inclusive Learning Environment

Teaching and learning practices are designed to support equitable outcomes:

- Reasonable adjustments and disability support are implemented through Support Through Studies and reviewed regularly
- Delivery is designed to be accessible, inclusive, and responsive to diverse learner needs
- Staff development in inclusive pedagogy is mandatory and linked to student outcome monitoring

Care Leavers

Oakswood College is committed to supporting care-experienced applicants and students. The College recognises that care-experienced learners may face additional challenges in accessing and succeeding in higher education and provides targeted support throughout the admissions process and the student journey.

- **Definition:**

For the purposes of this policy, care-experienced applicants include those who have spent any time in local authority care, foster care, residential care, kinship care, or other forms of statutory care, whether currently or in the past, regardless of the duration of the care experience.

- **Identification and contextual admissions:**

Applicants are encouraged to disclose care experience through the admissions route applicable to their programme, whether through the College's direct application process, including the application form and supporting documentation process (where applying directly), or direct communication with the Admissions or Student Services functions. Applicants who indicate care experience are considered as part of the College's contextual admissions framework, as set out in Section 17, to ensure fair access to higher education.

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- **Support provision:**

Care-experienced applicants and students may access the following dedicated support, where applicable:

- Pre-application advice and guidance on programme choice, entry requirements, and the application process.
- Support with accommodation arrangements, including signposting to suitable accommodation options and assistance with managing transitions between term-time and out-of-term periods, where this is relevant to the applicant's circumstances.
- Financial guidance and information on bursaries, scholarships, and other forms of financial support that may be available.
- Academic support throughout the programme of study, including study skills, personal tutoring, and access to learning resources.
- Wellbeing services, pastoral support, and access to mental health support through the Student Services function.

Named point of contact. A named point of contact within the Student Services function is available to assist care-experienced applicants and students throughout their journey at the College, from initial application through to graduation and progression. Applicants are provided with these details from the commencement of their contact with the College.

- **Partnerships and engagement:**

The College works with local authorities, leaving care teams, and relevant third-sector organisations to ensure that care-experienced applicants and students receive consistent and appropriate support. Where appropriate, the College participates in regional and national networks supporting access to higher education for care-experienced learners.

- **Information and access:**

Further information about the support available to care-experienced applicants and students is published on the College's website. Prospective applicants and current students are encouraged to contact the Student Services function for a confidential discussion about their needs at any stage.

Progression

Oakswood College supports students to progress into positive destinations after completion of their studies, including employment, further study, or relevant training opportunities.

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We recognise that students from widening participation backgrounds may face additional barriers to progression and provide targeted support to help address these.

Progression support includes embedded careers education, employer engagement activities, CV and interview preparation support, and signposting to further study and training opportunities.

Progression outcomes are monitored through internal tracking processes and partner university reporting where applicable.

6. Evaluation and Monitoring

Oakwood College monitors access, participation, and student outcomes through its established academic governance and quality assurance framework. This includes systematic review of admissions, continuation, attainment, and progression data, supported by student feedback and programme monitoring.

Evaluation focuses on measurable outcomes across the student lifecycle, including:

- Continuation and retention rates by widening participation characteristics
- Attainment differentials at module and programme level
- Completion and award outcomes across demographic groups
- Progression into employment or further study

Data is disaggregated by age, ethnicity, socioeconomic background, disability, entry route, and widening participation classification. Baseline measures will be established from the 2025/26 academic cycle to enable longitudinal comparison and tracking of improvement trends over time.

Intervention effectiveness is assessed using defined criteria, including:

- Evidence of improved engagement in targeted cohorts
- Reduction in continuation and attainment gaps over time
- Performance against baseline benchmarks
- Observable relationships between intervention participation and outcomes

Where interventions do not demonstrate sufficient impact within review cycles, they will be refined, replaced, or discontinued.

Student experience evidence is gathered through surveys, focus groups, and formal student representation structures. Qualitative and quantitative data are triangulated to assess validity and contextual influences on outcomes.

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Oversight of evaluation is provided through Academic Board and reported annually to the Board of Governors. Findings are used to inform strategic planning, resource allocation, and continuous improvement.

As institutional datasets mature, the College will strengthen benchmarking, expand longitudinal analysis, and enhance the robustness of outcome measurement.

7. Strategic Initiatives

The following strategic initiatives represent priority intervention areas based on EORR analysis and institutional risk profiling.

Outreach

Oakwood College continues to develop partnerships with local institutions, organisations, employers, and community stakeholders in order to:

- Sustained engagement with local schools, colleges, and community organisations through structured outreach cycles rather than one-off events
- Contribution of staff and students to outreach delivery to support authentic learner engagement
- Alignment with Uni Connect partnerships (Aim Higher and Aspire in the West Midlands) to target underrepresented learner groups through repeated engagement activities

Contextual Admissions

Oakwood College recognises that academic attainment alone may not fully reflect an applicant's potential to succeed in higher education. Personal, educational, and socio-economic circumstances can affect prior achievement, and a fair admissions system takes these into account alongside academic results. Contextual admissions refers to the practice of considering an applicant's background and circumstances as part of the admissions assessment, in order to widen participation, support social mobility, and ensure that potential is not overlooked because of circumstance.

Factors that the College may consider as part of a contextual admissions assessment include, but are not limited to:

- Attending a school or college with below-average performance.
- Living in an area with low rates of progression to higher education.

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- Eligibility for free school meals or other measures of low household income.
- Care experience or responsibilities as a young carer.
- Personal or family circumstances that disrupted prior education.
- Holding non-traditional qualifications or pathways into higher education.
- Significant prior professional or employment experience relevant to the programme.
- English as an additional language, or completion of an English language support pathway.

How contextual admissions is applied at Oakswood College

Oakswood College applies contextual consideration primarily through holistic assessment of an applicant's full profile. Rather than operating a separate threshold-based contextual offer scheme, the College considers contextual factors alongside academic attainment, prior experience, personal statements, and references when assessing each application. This approach is well-suited to the College's mature, non-traditional, and widening participation cohorts. Where it is appropriate to do so, contextual consideration may inform decisions including:

- Acceptance of an applicant whose academic attainment falls below the standard published entry requirements, but whose overall profile and context demonstrate the potential to succeed on the programme.
- The use of additional or alternative evidence, including interviews, written work, or further information from the applicant, to inform the admissions decision.
- Referral to a senior decision-maker within the Admissions function for cases requiring further consideration.

Sources of contextual data

The College draws on publicly available contextual data and indicators in its assessment of applicant context.

Where contextual data is available through a validating university partner, awarding body admissions platform, UCAS (where applicable), or another authorised admissions route, the College may consider such data as part of its contextual admissions assessment. For direct applicants, contextual information may be identified through application materials, supporting statements, references, or additional evidence provided by the applicant. Decisions made with reference to contextual factors are conditional on the accuracy of the information provided by the applicant.

Contextual admissions complements, but is distinct from, the College's provisions for:

- Recognition of Prior Learning which considers credit for previously achieved learning.
- Applicants with Special Circumstances which considers specific circumstances affecting prior performance.

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- Applicants Wishing to Reapply, which considers context including a previous application or period of study.

Where more than one of these frameworks may apply, the most appropriate route is identified by the Admissions function in consultation with the applicant.

Support Services

Oakwood College provides a range of academic, pastoral, and wellbeing support services designed to promote student engagement, belonging, retention, and success.

This includes:

- A holistic 'Support Through Studies' framework, embedded from enrolment, that combines academic and pastoral support to assist students to achieve their potential.
- Mental health counselling and disability support.
- Financial assistance for students from low-income households or care-experienced backgrounds.
- Academic skills workshops tailored to mature learners and learners from 'non-traditional' academic backgrounds.
- Opportunities for peer and graduate engagement activities to share experiences, guidance, and progression insights with new students where feasible.

Flexible Learning Pathways

To meet the needs of our diverse student body:

- Expand flexible learning options such as part-time courses, online modules, and evening classes.
- Develop Level 4/5 qualifications aligned with local employment needs.

Employability and Careers

Oakwood College operates a structured Employability and Careers Framework designed to support students' progression into employment, further study, and positive graduate outcomes. The framework integrates employability development throughout the student lifecycle and supports students in developing academic, professional, digital, and transferable skills aligned with regional and national workforce needs.

This includes employer engagement activities, guest speakers, project-based learning opportunities, careers guidance, CV and interview support, progression advice, and engagement with employers and industry representatives. Particular emphasis is placed on

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supporting students from widening participation and non-traditional educational backgrounds to develop confidence, professional networks, and career readiness.

The framework contributes to student engagement and continuation by strengthening students' understanding of the relevance of their studies to future employment, further study, and professional development opportunities. Further information is available within [the College's Employability and Careers Framework](#).

Future Delivery

Subject to institutional capacity and approval, the College will consider development of graduate mentoring and engagement initiatives to support students and recent graduates during transition into employment or further study. This may include alumni mentoring, graduate check-ins, progression guidance, employability support, networking opportunities, and continued professional development activities designed to strengthen graduate outcomes and ongoing engagement with the College community.

In planning the future development of its higher education provision, Oakswood College seeks to align portfolio growth and strategic initiatives with identified regional skills shortages, employer demand, widening participation priorities, and local labour market needs. This may include:

- Development proposals informed by evidence-based local and regional skills needs analysis
- Expansion of educational, employer, and community partnerships to support access, participation, employability, and progression objectives
- Exploration of flexible and employer-informed provision aligned with regional workforce priorities and underrepresented learner needs

8. Governance and Oversight

Oversight of implementation and evaluation is provided through Academic Board and relevant committee structures, with formal annual review and scrutiny by the Board of Governors. This includes representatives from senior management, academic staff, student services, and the student body. Student representatives sit on the Student Experience & Welfare Committee and contribute to the review of access, student success and progression outcomes¹.

¹ Sensitive personal information relating to individual students that is considered by the Committee is not shared with student members of the Student Experience & Welfare Committee.

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Evaluation findings are reviewed annually by Academic Board and reported to the Board of Governors for oversight and assurance.

As institutional datasets mature, Oakswood College will further develop measurable indicators and benchmarking approaches to support evaluation of access, participation, continuation, attainment, and progression outcomes.

9. Financial Support

Oakswood College understands that there are times when some students may need some financial support. Alongside our Hardship Fund, we work in partnership with BNU for relevant students to ensure the widest range of potential avenues of financial support. Eligibility criteria and allocation of financial support from Oakswood College are managed in line with institutional policies (including the Student Financial Support & Hardship Policy, applicable Terms & Conditions and Fees & Refund Policies, and Support Through Studies Policy & Procedures) and reviewed annually.

10. Collaborative Partnerships

The College recognises that sustained, locally embedded collaboration is more effective than isolated outreach activity in supporting access and participation outcomes. Partnerships are therefore structured to enable ongoing engagement with schools, employers, community organisations, and alumni networks.

Community-based work can also support participation because trusted local organisations reduce cultural and informational barriers for first-generation, low-income, mature and minoritised learners, particularly where families are unfamiliar with higher education.

Employer partnerships can support access and success by making higher education feel more relevant and financially viable for individuals, especially for mature, part-time and work-based learners. Alumni and recent graduates can also play an important role in supporting access and participation because they provide relatable role models, 'real life' practical advice, and mentoring. Such mentoring can improve understanding of how to succeed in higher education as well as increased confidence and, importantly, a sense of belonging. Creating a sense of belonging for all students regardless of background is an essential part of the College's endeavours.

Collaborative partnerships – particularly, but not exclusively, in our local region – are therefore a key factor for the College in meeting the aims set out in this Access & Participation Statement. To this end, Oakswood College actively collaborates with:

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- Local schools and colleges to raise attainment among young people from underrepresented groups.
- Birmingham-based FE colleges.
- West Midlands Combined Authority employer networks.
- Community organisations to engage hard-to-reach communities in HE pathways.
- Employers to co-design programmes/activities that align with workforce needs.
- Recent graduates to help identify emerging progression barriers and provide insight into graduate transition experiences.

Further to this document, please see also the College's APS Delivery & Implementation Plan (Appendix A), and KPI Assurance Framework (Appendix B) which accompany this Access & Participation Statement.