



Reaseheath College and University Centre Executive Summary: External Board Review (April 2026)

The External Board Review (EBR) review was undertaken by Rob Lawson OBE between January and April 2026 using the Association of Colleges (AoC) External Board Review Framework.

The EBR concluded that Reaseheath College has an effective, high-performing Board with a strong range of skills, experience and governance practices. The reviewer found strong evidence that the Board is proficient and consistently impacts on college effectiveness and outcomes. Governance was judged to be well led, ambitious for learners, and characterised by constructive challenge, transparency, and accountability.

The review found a strong Board culture and effective challenge. It found that the Board has responded well to feedback from Ofsted and significantly improved the level of scrutiny, challenge and triangulation of quality improvement activities since the 2024 inspection.

The review highlighted the following Board culture strengths:

- Open and transparent culture.
- Governors feel confident to challenge.
- Respectful but robust scrutiny.
- Strong leadership from the Chair.
- Positive relationships between governors and executives.

The following table summarises the headline strengths and areas for development identified across the themes of Board Composition, Board Structure and Board Interaction

BOARD COMPOSITION	
STRENGTHS	AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT
The Board has an excellent array of skills and experiences with vast education experience, as well as good experience in the areas of finance, law and HR	The Board needs to continue its efforts to recruit from ethnically diverse communities to ensure it incorporates as many diverse perspectives and lived experience as possible
Board and committee meetings observed were conducted at purpose and pace, though not at the expense of effective scrutiny and challenge.	The Board needs to decide which terms of service to use – two terms of four, or three terms of three.
There is a diversity of thought on the Board, a result of such a large Board having a range of different backgrounds, skills and experiences.	The attendance target should be increased to 80 per cent – in line with most colleges.
Questions and challenge come from across the Board and not just from a core of more experienced governors.	A governor stakeholder mapping exercise could help the college engage with more stakeholders.

BOARD STRUCTURE	
STRENGTHS	AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT
A well-established and effective link governor scheme is in place.	Guidance notes for staff hosting link governor visits and learning walks would help staff prepare for such visits.
Agendas and cover sheets are exemplary.	Awareness of Nolan Principles could be improved.
Both evaluation and self assessment are taken seriously by the Board and there is plenty of evidence of both.	Agendas could include information about any committee an item has previously been discussed at.
The governance section of college website comprehensive and thorough	Agreement around risk appetite between governors and the executive is needed.
BOARD INTERACTION	
STRENGTHS	AREAS FOR DEVELOPMENT
Challenge is strong, comes from a wide range of governors and can be robust and persistent.	On rare occasions, challenge and discussion can get too operational.
Good working relationship between Board and executive, and a strong relationship between the triumvirate.	
Well respected and highly efficient governance professional	
Exemplary approach to induction and serious and thoughtful approach to ongoing training	

Following the review an action plan was drawn up which encompassed the recommendations from the External Board Review. Progress on this is reviewed by the Board's Search and Governance Committee and assessed in the Board's Self-Assessment.