External Board Review – Website Summary (May 2026)

Overview

Craven College commissioned an independent External Board Review to assess the effectiveness of its governance. The review was carried out by Sandra Prail MBE between January and May 2026, using the Association of Colleges framework aligned with Department for Education guidance.

Overall conclusion

The review found that the Board is proficient and effective in its governance role, making a positive impact on college strategy, performance and outcomes, and is well positioned to move to the next level of governance maturity. Governance has improved significantly since the previous review, with strong foundations now firmly in place.

Key strengths

Strong and skilled Board:

- Broad and relevant mix of skills and experience.
- Regular skills audits informing recruitment, training and development.
- Governors are committed, well-prepared and engaged.
- Clear expectations on tenure (typically max 8 years)

Effective governance structures:

- Governance arrangements have been reviewed and strengthened.
- Committee structure works effectively and supports strategic oversight.
- Improved quality of reporting, with clearer and more concise, data-led information.
- Meetings are well chaired with effective support and constructive challenge.

Positive culture and relationships:

- Strong relationship between Chair, Principal and Director of Governance (Triumvirate).
- Positive, professional, open and respectful culture, balancing support and challenge.
- Clear focus on students and strategic priorities.
- Active self-reflection and continuous improvement

Impact on strategy and performance:

- The Board plays an active role in setting strategic direction and monitoring progress/performance.
- Financial oversight is strong and risk management is developing well.
- Governance has improved since the 2022 review, with all recommendations addressed

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The Review made one recommendation:

- Review governance KPIs to develop a single governance SMART action plan. This plan should be owned by the Board with clear mechanisms for monitoring progress.

Summary

Governance at Craven College is effective and improving. The Board has a strong platform and will continue to strengthen assurance and drive improvement.

Next Steps/Progress

- A detailed SMART action plan has been developed and approved by the Board (July 2026).
- Progress will be monitored through governance processes and self-assessment.