

Inspection of City of Wolverhampton College

Inspection dates: 17 to 20 January 2023

Overall effectiveness	Good
<hr/>	
The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Education programmes for young people	Good
Adult learning programmes	Good
Apprenticeships	Requires improvement
Provision for learners with high needs	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Information about this provider

The City of Wolverhampton College is a general further education college. The college has three campuses in Wolverhampton and a polymer training centre in Telford, Shropshire. The college provides vocational, technical and professional education and training to learners of all ages from entry-level to higher education.

At the time of inspection, the provider had 2138 learners aged 16 to 18 enrolled, 3186 on adult learning programmes and 691 apprentices. A high proportion of apprentices study standards-based apprenticeships in engineering, construction and business administration. There were 198 learners in receipt of high-needs funding.

Leaders at the college work with four subcontractors who provide training for 646 learners. Subcontracted learners are enrolled on courses in groundworks and plant, rail, electric vehicle, accounting and sports programmes.

What is it like to be a learner with this provider?

Learners and apprentices develop positive attitudes to learning. Adult learners in English for speakers of other languages classes look forward to their learning and demonstrate high levels of concentration to complete their class activities.

Learners and apprentices respond positively to the high expectations that leaders, managers and staff set. They undertake learning that is highly challenging. Learners are supported by staff to achieve their best in nearly all cases.

Learners and apprentices enjoy and thrive in creative and inclusive learning environments. They take pride in their work and are ambitious for their futures. Nearly all A-level learners move on to study at their first-choice university.

Leaders, managers and teachers promote a culture of respect, tolerance and inclusivity. Learners and apprentices gain a clear awareness of life in modern Britain, in particular equality and diversity and the importance of respecting differences and how this contributes to community cohesion.

Learners and apprentices enjoy a broad range of enrichment activities, which helps them to support their wider skill development effectively. Learners develop skills such as confidence and teamwork through these activities. Leaders work hard to diversify the range of these activities, to promote greater learner involvement. For example, the introduction of a female football academy and a well-attended kabaddi group.

Most learners and apprentices receive appropriate and helpful impartial careers advice and guidance. However, a small minority of learners are not fully aware of the opportunities available to them after the completion of their studies. For example, adult learners on access to higher education courses are not sufficiently aware of the range of opportunities available to them beyond that of the level 3 qualification.

Learners and apprentices attend their learning well in nearly all cases. However, those learners who are required to study either English or mathematics qualifications alongside that of their main programme do not attend those sessions sufficiently well. As a result, these learners do not always develop their English and mathematics skills to the extent of which they are capable.

Learners and apprentices feel safe. They know who to report their concerns to and, where appropriate, follow safe working practices diligently.

Contribution to meeting skills needs

The college makes a reasonable contribution to meeting skills needs.

Leaders engage well with stakeholder groups to establish a clear understanding of local, regional and national skills needs. In particular, the college works proactively with the Wolverhampton Education, Skills and Employment Board. This board acts to

bring stakeholders together to implement a strategy to upskill the local communities in Wolverhampton to meet identified skills requirements.

College leaders play an active and valued role in ensuring that collaborative work takes place across the region successfully. Leaders share resource and expertise with other providers effectively. This is for the betterment of the local area. Leaders work with a local partner to develop and teach the plant groundwork operative curriculum. This ensures that light and heavy plant skills are being developed across the region to meet identified skill priorities.

Leaders are responsive to the needs of their stakeholders. They are proactive in designing and implementing courses to meet specific skills needs, for example the development of a number of sector-based work academy programmes. These meet local skills needs in construction, electric vehicle maintenance, rail track safety and social care.

Leaders ensure that most curriculum areas involve external partners in the design and implementation of the curriculum to meet skills needs. For example, computing learners are taught directly by industry professionals on subjects such as performance architecture, the nature of client liaison and software development. However, in a very small number of curriculum areas, wider stakeholder involvement is currently limited. Consequently, a few learners do not currently benefit from external stakeholder involvement.

What does the provider do well and what does it need to do better?

Leaders and managers have designed a broad curriculum which meets the needs of the local economy. The curriculum is clear in its purpose and is ambitious for all learners, including those with education, health and care plans (EHCPs). As a result, learners develop skills, knowledge and behaviours which enable them to be successful in the future.

Leaders and managers engage effectively with a range of employers, stakeholders and partners to ensure that the curriculum content is appropriate and aligns with current industry trends and practices. For example, external partners support the delivery of the curriculum through masterclasses, guest speaker visits and practical activities. Learners develop the skills and knowledge that they need to succeed in the industries in which they aspire to work.

Leaders and managers have effective relationships with their subcontractors. Partners are actively involved in curriculum design. Leaders ensure that partners improve the quality of education that learners receive. They select and teach a curriculum which aligns with both existing and emerging skills needs. For example, through the development of railway skills initiatives, these programmes meet the high regional demand for specialist and skilled railway workers. Learners on subcontracted programmes develop the necessary skills to be successful in their chosen professions.

Leaders, managers and teachers ensure that nearly all curriculums are appropriately sequenced. This helps learners to build on their knowledge sequentially, and to retain the understanding of key concepts over time. Young learners in sports level 3 courses, identify the key characteristics and qualities of sports coaches before they progress to leading coaching sessions. However, in some cases, the planning of the curriculum for apprentices is less effective. Plans for learning are not always adhered to, and, consequently, apprentices are not always supported to achieve their potential.

Nearly all teachers and assessors are appropriately qualified and experienced in the subjects they teach. For example, in railway technician programmes, teachers have significant industrial experience. They use this to good effect when sharing content with learners. As a result, learners produce work which is of a high standard.

Teachers have a clear understanding of learners' starting points. They use this information effectively in order to plan learning in nearly all cases. For example, on the 'bumper to bumper automotive course', learners who have previous experience of automotive manufacturing are supported to access new and more complex content quickly. Learners build on and develop their skills rapidly. However, assessors do not always use apprentices' starting points consistently well to inform planning. In these cases, the learning that apprentices undertake is not targeted sufficiently well to remedy apprentices' skills gaps.

Teachers plan lessons effectively and use a range of teaching and learning strategies to engage and enthuse learners. In A-level courses, teachers recap and revisit learning through interactive quizzes. Where learners have misconceptions, teachers take corrective action to rectify these promptly. As a result, learners know and remember more over time.

Teachers do not always ensure that learners receive useful and suitable feedback on their work. In a few cases, in both adult learning and study programmes, feedback is not sufficiently developmental. It is overly positive and focuses too much on the coverage of qualification criteria. As a result, learners are not always clear on exactly what they need to do to achieve their very best.

Teachers develop learners' and apprentices' technical and vocational terminology skilfully. As a result, learners develop their English skills successfully. Learners often develop glossaries and use these well to support them in their written and practical work. Through the actions that teachers take, learners make improvements in spelling, punctuation and grammar and their reading skills.

Teachers ensure that learners develop their mathematical skills throughout their studies, in most instances. Electrical installation learners undertake increasingly more difficult mathematical tasks in relation to electrical current and resistance. However, for those apprentices who do not take functional skills as part of their studies, the development of their mathematical skills is not always well planned. As

a result, too few apprentices develop their mathematical skills to the standards of which they are capable.

Teachers use information from assessments to plan future learning to close gaps in learners' knowledge and understanding effectively. They use assessment tasks that increase in complexity over time. For example, as learners progress through the electrical installation curriculum, teachers introduce project-based activities which bring together a range of learned content in a contextualised way. As a result, learners build on and consolidate their existing knowledge, as well as being able to recall new learning fluently.

Leaders, managers and teachers ensure that learners and apprentices benefit from well-resourced classrooms and work in areas that are well equipped with industry-standard resources. Learners on football academy programmes benefit from high-standard professional football facilities and have access to equipment for match analysis and fitness testing.

Leaders ensure that those learners with high needs make at least the same or better progress than their peers. The majority move into further training or on to their desired destination, such as independent or assisted living. However, leaders do not ensure that the small number of learners with high needs who study employability courses develop their knowledge and skills consistently well. In these cases, teachers fail to track learners' skill development sufficiently, so that they can achieve their full potential.

Leaders take clear actions to improve the curriculum. As a result, a very high proportion of study programme and adult learners achieve their qualifications. They progress to their next steps in nearly all cases, including the next level of education and training or into employment. It is too early to assess the recent actions that leaders have taken to improve the quality of education for apprentices. Leaders and assessors now put into place clear actions to support apprentices to catch up rapidly. However, it is too soon to assess the impact of these actions.

Leaders and managers have developed a coherent structure for governance. The governing body contains highly experienced practitioners who scrutinise leaders' performance effectively. Governors challenge leaders robustly and actively support them to achieve their strategic goals. Governors have been instrumental in ensuring that leaders continue to make improvements in the quality of education that learners receive.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Senior leaders ensure that the college safeguarding leads are well qualified and suitably experienced. Leaders invest in additional staffing to further secure the safety of learners and apprentices, for example the deployment of full-time

safeguarding officers, an on-site security team and the training of more than 25 mental health first aiders.

Staff use a range of behaviour and well-being policies to maintain learner safety effectively. Leaders ensure that staff complete appropriate training in safeguarding throughout their career at the college. They have well-thought-through and appropriate onboarding processes when staff commence employment at the college. Policies for safe recruitment are adhered to diligently.

Nearly all learners and apprentices have a well-developed understanding of safeguarding. This is achieved through challenging tutorial sessions which focus successfully on topics such as identifying harmful sexual behaviours and the importance of positive and healthy lifestyles and consent.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders and managers should continue to improve the quality of education that apprentices receive, to ensure that they complete their apprenticeship successfully and achieve grades of which they are capable.
- Managers should ensure that learners studying English and mathematics attend their lessons more frequently, in order to improve their knowledge and skills development, so that they achieve their very best in these qualifications.
- Leaders and managers should improve the tracking of skills and behaviours of learners with high needs who are on discrete employability courses. They need to ensure that teachers plan and monitor the skills learners develop in preparation for their next steps.
- Leaders, managers and teachers should ensure that all learners and apprentices receive feedback which is clear and developmental so that learners and apprentices improve the standard of their work over time.
- Leaders should ensure that all learners and apprentices are aware of the range of opportunities available to them after they complete their studies so that they can make suitably informed decisions for their futures.

Provider details

Unique reference number	130484
Address	Paget Road Wolverhampton West Midlands WV6 0DU
Contact number	01902 836000
Website	www.wolvcoll.ac.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Malcolm Cowgill
Provider type	General further education college
Dates of previous inspection	14 to 17 November 2017
Main subcontractors	Aspire Training Solutions Ltd Duplex Business Services Ltd National Infrastructure Solutions Ltd The Finance and Management Business School Ltd

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the deputy principal, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider’s most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. The inspection was carried out using the [further education and skills inspection handbook](#) and took into account all relevant provision at the provider. Inspectors collected a wide range of evidence to inform judgements, including visiting learning sessions, scrutinising learners’ work, seeking the views of learners, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider’s documentation and records.

Inspection team

Mark Parton, lead inspector	His Majesty’s Inspector
Bev Ramsell	His Majesty’s Inspector
Jenny Murphy	Ofsted Inspector
Andrew Thompson	Ofsted Inspector
Jaswant Mann	Ofsted Inspector
Claire Beaman	Ofsted Inspector
Ben Crook	Ofsted Inspector
Ian Higgins	His Majesty’s Inspector
Susan Gay	Ofsted Inspector
Helen Morgan	His Majesty’s Inspector
Malcolm Fraser	His Majesty’s Inspector
Rachel Clark	His Majesty’s Inspector
William Baidoe-Ansah	Ofsted Inspector
Stuart Collett	His Majesty’s Inspector

The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) regulates and inspects to achieve excellence in the care of children and young people, and in education and skills for learners of all ages. It regulates and inspects childcare and children's social care, and inspects the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (Cafcass), schools, colleges, initial teacher training, further education and skills, adult and community learning, and education and training in prisons and other secure establishments. It assesses council children's services, and inspects services for children looked after, safeguarding and child protection.

If you would like a copy of this document in a different format, such as large print or Braille, please telephone 0300 123 1231, or email enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk.

You may reuse this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/, write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

This publication is available at <http://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/>.

Interested in our work? You can subscribe to our monthly newsletter for more information and updates: <http://eepurl.com/iTrDn>.

Piccadilly Gate
Store Street
Manchester
M1 2WD

T: 0300 123 1231
Textphone: 0161 618 8524
E: enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
W: www.gov.uk/ofsted

© Crown copyright 2023