

Inspection of Hull College

Inspection dates:

24 to 27 October 2023

Overall effectiveness**Good**

The quality of education

Good

Behaviour and attitudes

Good

Personal development

Outstanding

Leadership and management

Good

Education programmes for young people

Good

Adult learning programmes

Outstanding

Apprenticeships

Good

Provision for learners with high needs

Good

Overall effectiveness at previous inspection

Requires improvement

Information about this provider

Hull College is a large general further education college that recruits learners and apprentices from across the City of Hull and East Riding of Yorkshire. It provides a wide range of courses from entry level to level 7. At the time of the inspection, there were 2,384 learners on education programmes for young people, including 175 enrolled on full-time programmes for those aged 14 to 16, 1,268 adult learners, 939 apprentices and 163 learners with high needs, of whom 74 were on specialist programmes. The college provides T-level courses, which began in September 2023.

The college is based on three sites in close proximity to each other. At the main site, provision includes art and design, programmes for learners aged 14 to 16, and apprenticeships. The Hull College of Mechanics accommodates motor vehicle, fabrication and welding, and Trinity Sports Hall and Fitness Suite houses sport and fitness and public uniformed services programmes. The college subcontracts part of its adult learning provision to three providers.

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

Most learners and apprentices benefit from high-quality teaching and training. Most teachers use a variety of effective teaching strategies to help learners and apprentices practise what they have learned and extend their knowledge and understanding. On adult learning programmes, most teachers plan and teach highly effective lessons, using activities that motivate and inspire learners. Adult learners quickly develop confidence and skills in their vocational subjects and in English and mathematics. In a few instances, however, on specialist courses for learners with high needs and on the level 3 access to higher education (health science professions pathway) course, teachers do not use sufficiently effective teaching strategies. As a result, a few learners on these courses do not have sufficient opportunities to deepen and extend their knowledge and understanding.

Learners and apprentices benefit from calm and respectful learning environments across the different areas of the college. Staff form good working relationships with learners and apprentices, who feel comfortable to contribute to their learning sessions. Learners aged 14 to 16 have their own dedicated and safe learning and social areas, which helps them to adjust fully to college life.

Staff model good behaviours and attitudes, and have high expectations of learners and apprentices to do the same. Most learners and apprentices replicate these good behaviours in learning environments and in social areas of the college. Staff discuss and set the expected standards during the initial interview and induction stage.

Staff have created a highly inclusive environment in which a diverse group of learners and apprentices learn well together. They promote a culture that proudly celebrates the diversity of the college community. Learners and apprentices take pride in their contribution to the fabric of the college and wider society. They work well together and learn from each other, in readiness for the realities of future life and work.

Most learners and apprentices attend their learning sessions well, arrive on time and are prepared to learn. Adult learners and apprentices have particularly high attendance. Attendance has increased as a result of successful interventions by staff. Leaders and managers rightly recognise the need to improve further the attendance of learners on education programmes for young people, particularly in GCSE English and mathematics. They have recently implemented further actions, such as following up absences much more quickly, identifying learners at risk of dropping out due to non-attendance and providing effective support. These actions have had a positive impact in the early weeks of the current academic year.

Learners and apprentices demonstrate positive attitudes towards their learning and take pride in their work. They benefit from the expertise of their teachers and the support that they receive. Learners value the opportunity to work with employers. For example, learners on the level 2 technical certificate in electrical installation complete an employer-designed project with support from employers.

Learners and apprentices feel safe and know to whom they should report any concerns. Staff support learners and apprentices well to help them to understand how to keep themselves safe from harm, including from the risks of radicalisation and extremism. Staff provide learners and apprentices with current and relevant information about risks and deliver sessions about these topics with sensitivity and care. For example, they discuss with adult learners the historical context of extremism in the United Kingdom and explain the purpose of protective measures in the city, such as raised bollards to prevent terrorist attacks that use vehicles. Most adult learners are confident to identify suspicious behaviour and understand the importance of reporting specific details with the police.

Contribution to meeting skills needs

The college makes a strong contribution to meeting skills needs.

Leaders and managers have developed highly positive relationships with an extensive range of stakeholders. They are involved in a wide range of groups, some of which they have established themselves, that give them insights into the skills needs of stakeholders, including employers, in the region. They use the knowledge that they gain from these groups to develop a curriculum that aligns closely with the Local Skills Improvement Plans (LSIPs) and the needs of the region. The principal and chief executive officer of the college sits on the LSIP Board and Humber Principals Group and also chairs the Integrated Care Service – Education and Training Board. Leaders have also established employer engagement groups that include employers, and members of the Local Enterprise Partnership and Skills Advisory Group. These employer engagement groups focus on future skills needs.

Leaders, managers and curriculum staff work very well with stakeholders in the design and delivery of the curriculum. They make good use of information from stakeholders and labour market intelligence when planning the curriculum. Staff carefully consider the content of the curriculum based on their frequent liaison with employers, including through their well-attended expert advisory panels. Managers tailor the curriculum to include the knowledge and skills needed in their sectors. As a result, the programmes offered and the content of the curriculum are up to date and responsive. For example, staff who teach on healthcare apprenticeship programmes work with Hull University Teaching Hospital to embed the Care Certificate in the level 3 apprenticeship. This is a recognised set of standards for health and care professionals and ensures that the course meets industry standards. Adult learners on the level 3 access to higher education (health science professions) course benefit from guest speakers from local universities, who deliver lectures about the use of blood to diagnose disease in biomedical science and the process of taking blood in a healthcare setting. This enables adult learners to gain insights into the latest practice and to learn more about roles in a range of healthcare professions.

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

Governors have recruited a strong senior leadership team following a long period of change and instability at the college. The newly formed leadership team has focused on changing the culture in the college to one in which staff operate with support and accountability. They have made rapid improvements to the experience of learners and apprentices at the college. For example, they have introduced effective reporting processes to ensure that leaders and managers track the progress of all learners and apprentices and take appropriate action when needed. This led to a significant increase in 2022/23 in the proportion of apprentices who achieved their qualifications.

Leaders and managers work with a small number of subcontractors to provide high-quality provision to adult learners. They work with providers that offer programmes such as the level 2 award in working as a door supervisor. Leaders and managers have effective oversight of the quality of the courses that subcontractors teach through a range of activities, such as observations of teaching and meeting with learners.

Leaders and managers ensure that teachers are suitably qualified and highly experienced in the subjects that they teach. Teachers keep their subject expertise up to date through relevant training activities. As a result, learners and apprentices benefit from teaching that is current and relevant. Teachers on the level 3 domestic plumbing and heating apprenticeship attend webinars and events on key topics to keep abreast of emerging developments in the sector, such as renewable energy. Most teachers who teach on the level 3 art, design and communication diploma course continue to work in the industry as freelance practitioners, which enables them to provide learners with up-to-date information.

Teachers use initial assessment well to identify what learners and apprentices already know and can do. They make good use of information from initial assessment to plan teaching that meets learners' and apprentices' specific needs. They adapt teaching plans according to the needs of learners and apprentices, which helps them to make good progress. Young people on GCSE English courses know their target grade. They talk confidently about the skills in which they are competent and know what they need to improve.

Managers and teachers carefully plan and structure courses to help learners and apprentices successively build on their learning over time. For example, level 3 plumbing apprentices learn to build plumbing frames with different complexities in year 1 before applying these skills to installations in year 2. In year 3, they undertake more complex installations before moving on to their chosen specialist pathway in year 4. Apprentices become fully rounded and highly skilled plumbing technicians.

Teachers use a range of assistive technologies and strategies to enable learners and apprentices with high needs to participate fully in sessions. For example, they

provide visually impaired learners with handouts in a large typeface and provide reading pens to help them read the information. Teachers upload assignments to learning platforms, so that learners can access them at any time and use digital assistive technologies, such as immersive readers, to support them with their learning. Learners with autism use ear defenders in lessons to help them better focus on their work. This support contributes to ensuring that learners and apprentices with high needs achieve in line with their peers.

Most teachers support learners and apprentices well to develop their English and mathematical skills in vocational sessions. Teachers on the level 3 art, design and communication diploma support learners well to measure canvases and to write descriptions for exhibited artwork. Teachers use subject-specific technical vocabulary and terminology effectively in their teaching. As a result, learners and apprentices learn and use appropriate technical language.

Learners studying GCSE English and mathematics courses benefit from high-quality teaching. Teachers support adult learners to understand the value of mathematics to their work and personal lives. Adult learners on GCSE mathematics courses acquire skills and knowledge that enable them to manage household budgets and to support their children and grandchildren with their schoolwork. Teachers help younger learners to improve the English language skills that they need for their future careers. They work closely with vocational teachers to help learners understand the relevance of English in vocational areas.

Most learners and apprentices make good progress from their starting points in developing their knowledge, skills and behaviours, and achieve their qualifications. A very high proportion of adult learners achieve their qualifications. A high proportion of learners on access to higher education courses progress to higher education, and the vast majority of adult learners on courses in English for speakers of other languages and GCSE mathematics courses progress to the next level of study. Leaders and managers rightly recognise that they need to continue to improve achievement for young people, learners with high needs and apprentices.

Staff provide learners with an extensive range of opportunities to explore new interests and talents, and to develop their confidence. They pay particular attention to supporting the most disadvantaged learners. They plan opportunities to broaden the experience of learners and apprentices beyond their immediate communities through a range of trips and visits. For example, learners on 3-D design courses visited a Buddhist meditation centre located in a listed building set in woodland.

Staff plan substantial opportunities to help learners and apprentices to understand what it means to be responsible, respectful and active citizens. For example, learners work with local football clubs and charities to exhibit football memorabilia for the benefit of those living with dementia. Learners in hair and beauty work with the charity, Hull and East Riding Breast Friends, to provide patients and carers with support and pamper events. As a result of these opportunities, learners recognise the role that they can play in supporting their communities and the positive difference that they can make to the lives of others.

Teachers ensure that learners and apprentices can make informed choices about their next steps and make progress towards securing their future career goals. Learners and apprentices benefit from an effective college-wide careers programme, a dedicated careers service, and guidance throughout the curriculum. They have talks from guest speakers, many of whom are previous learners, to help them realise what they can become. An increasing number of learners complete external work experience to develop insights into the world of work and the employability skills required for their future careers. Art learners are commissioned to create artwork and designs for high-profile employers, giving them first-hand experience of working with a client, understanding a design brief and meeting deadlines to achieve a project outcome.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Leaders and managers keep sufficient records of student safeguarding concerns, which are used effectively to monitor the support provided and referrals to external agencies. However, they do not ensure that all safeguarding concerns are recorded in a timely manner.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Ensure that all safeguarding concerns are recorded in a timely manner.
- Improve further the attendance of learners on education programmes for young people, including to GCSE English and mathematics sessions.
- Maintain the focus on increasing the proportion of young people, learners with high needs and apprentices who achieve their qualifications.

Provider details

Unique reference number	130579
Address	Queen's Gardens Wilberforce Drive Hull HU1 3DG
Contact number	01482 329943
Website	www.hull-college.ac.uk
Principal, CEO or equivalent	Debra Gray MBE
Provider type	General further education college
Date of previous inspection	8 to 11 February 2022
Main subcontractors	Blue Apple Training Portull Training Services Limited The Skills Network

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the vice-principal for quality and learner experience, 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

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