

# Inspection of Heart of Yorkshire Education Group

Inspection dates: 3 to 6 October and 19 October 2023

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

## Information about this provider

The Heart of Yorkshire Education Group is a large group of general further education colleges in Wakefield, Selby and Castleford. The group offers provision across most vocational and academic subjects from entry level to level 5. At the time of inspection, there were 4,759 learners on education programmes for young people, 321 learners with high needs, 1,289 adult learners and 1,111 apprentices. The group provides T-level courses at all three colleges.

Wakefield College and Castleford College are in city and town centre locations while Selby College is in a more rural location. All colleges have good access to public transport and provide free transport for learners who need it. Learners at Wakefield College study programmes across all sectors. Selby College and Castleford College have a high proportion of learners and apprentices studying engineering and construction. Provision for learners with high needs is offered across all colleges.

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

Learners and apprentices benefit from calm and inclusive classrooms and workshops at all three colleges. Staff establish high expectations of behaviour and conduct and promote these throughout learners' programmes. Learners and apprentices are fully aware of these expectations and meet them wherever they are studying.

Relationships among learners and staff are positive and respectful. Apprentices demonstrate a very positive attitude in both theory and practical skills sessions. They are responsive to teacher questioning and coaching, and engage fully in allocated tasks.

Leaders and managers prioritise the well-being of learners. They engage with a range of agencies and local partners to share information, and they remain alert to the changing risks posed to learners both locally and nationally. Staff tailor personal development programmes to meet the needs of more vulnerable learners, supporting them to develop their confidence, resilience, self-esteem and ability to make good choices once they have progressed beyond the care of the organisation.

Learners benefit from teachers who are well qualified and who have expertise in the subjects that they teach. Many teachers continue to practise in their specialist fields. They use their knowledge and experience well to ensure that learners and apprentices acquire specialist technical knowledge and skills.

Most learners attend well and are punctual at all colleges. Learners know that attendance is important and that if they miss lessons, they miss important learning. However, learners' attendance on GCSE English and mathematics courses is lower than on other learning programmes, which impedes their progress.

Most tutors and teachers plan valuable opportunities for learners to understand what it means to be responsible, respectful and active citizens who can play their part in public life. For example, level 3 performing arts learners design productions to raise awareness of pertinent issues in the college community, such as helping to identify signs and risks of radicalisation and extremism. As a result of these opportunities, learners recognise the role that they play in their communities and value the ways in which they can raise awareness of social and cultural issues.

Learners and apprentices benefit from an effective careers programme that supports them to understand the range of opportunities available on completion of their programme and to make informed choices about their next steps. Most learners and apprentices are ambitious for their future and gain the knowledge and skills to navigate a path towards their chosen career.

Learners feel safe at all three colleges. They feel comfortable voicing concerns to tutors as part of the safeguarding process. Staff respond quickly to safeguarding concerns such as domestic abuse, working with in-house support services and external agencies to support learners.

Learners enjoy a tutorial programme through which they can discuss and debate issues such as healthy relationships, extremism and radicalisation in a mature environment with staff and their peers. This enables them to respect and understand different viewpoints and more fully understand the personal risks that they may face.

## **Contribution to meeting skills needs**

The college makes a strong contribution to meeting skills needs.

Leaders and managers have developed an ambitious curriculum to meet regional and national skills needs. They maintain highly effective relationships with a range of stakeholders that enable them to have a good understanding of skills needs. They collaborate with civic partners such as local councils, mayoral combined authorities and chambers of commerce. Leaders and managers work closely with other colleges in West Yorkshire to align their curriculums and avoid duplication. They work very effectively with their employer partners in identifying skills needs. They gather feedback from a wide range of employers to address their specific needs. Leaders and managers are proactive participants in developing the skills strategy for the region. They play an active role in collaborative research into innovative responses to skills needs.

In planning the curriculum, leaders and managers make particularly effective use of the information that they receive from their stakeholders. Managers and teachers work with industry experts to understand the specific needs of their sectors. Leaders have established sector-based employer forums for the key skills priority areas in West and North Yorkshire. For example, teachers collaborate with employers to provide learners with exposure to the world of work in the construction industry. The 'Watch Me Grow' initiative allows learners on construction courses to see a live construction site at several stages from ground level to project completion. Employers from a range of sectors organise 'industry insight days' and provide high-quality work placements for learners. Skilled tradespersons come to college and give talks on job roles and critique learners' work to help them improve their industry skills. They talk to learners about career opportunities and what employers are looking for when recruiting staff.

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

Leaders have put in place a comprehensive three-year strategic plan following the merger of the two main component colleges. They rightly recognise that the group has been through a period of considerable change following the merger. They have amended the management structure to ensure that the culture of the organisation and management systems are aligned.

Teachers use their subject expertise to carefully and logically sequence learning so that learners and apprentices develop their knowledge and build on their skills over time. Apprentices on the level 3 dental apprenticeship start by learning about the

risks of cross infection before moving on to cross-infection protection measures during dental treatments. They progress to learn how to decontaminate after dental procedures, which enables them to develop the skills to manage infection control when working in the surgery. Teachers provide opportunities for learners on the level 3 public services course to develop their communication, teamwork and analytical skills in year one. Teachers then revisit these concepts in year two so that learners can apply them in real-life example emergency simulations such as bomb threats and knife attacks.

On most courses, teachers use learners' and apprentices' starting points well to plan learning that enables learners and apprentices to develop the skills that they need. However, on a small number of courses, teachers do not use learners' starting points effectively. For example, in a few instances on the level 3 electrical installation apprenticeship, apprentices who already have existing knowledge and skills repeat training that they have already covered.

Most teachers use a wide range of teaching strategies well to help learners and apprentices practise, understand and remember key concepts from previous learning. On the level 3 electrical installation apprenticeship, teachers support apprentices to apply their existing knowledge to installing a basic wiring circuit and extend their knowledge further by safely using armoured cabling and installing a command unit. Teachers in level 2 business at Wakefield successfully use quizzes to recap key elements of sustainability, which helps learners embed this knowledge into their long-term memory and develop a deeper understanding of the topic. On courses in English for speakers of other languages, teachers use red and green cards with learners so that they can immediately assess learners' accuracy, before moving on to targeted questioning to identify and correct misconceptions. At Castleford, barbering learners benefit from a step-by-step visual demonstration of how to carry out an accurate cut and are provided with a useful handout to record their own notes. As a result, learners feel confident when they start the activity.

Teachers use a range of effective assessment strategies in lessons to check learners' and apprentices' understanding and to identify gaps in their knowledge. They make good use of use workbooks, mock examinations, quizzes, observations and professional discussions. Teachers on the T level in childcare use skilful questioning to assess what learners know and can do. As a result, learners can confidently identify and explain the knowledge and skills that they have developed and identify how they will apply these to the learning plans they devise for children in placements. Teachers on adult learning courses use frequent assessments to check that learners have the functional English skills that they need for their everyday lives, such as being able to write an accurate letter. They make good use of mock test papers to assess learners' progress and help learners recognise what they need to improve.

Most teachers support learners well to develop their English and mathematics skills in vocational lessons. Teachers in level 2 business consistently correct spelling, punctuation and grammar mistakes, and learners improve their work quickly. Teachers provide activities that help learners on the T level in childcare to use their

mathematics skills to budget accurately for buying resources to equip a nursery. Leaders and managers recognise that the development of mathematics on the level 3 performing arts course at Wakefield is an area for development and have taken steps to demonstrate to learners the importance of mathematics for future careers. However, it is too early to assess the impact of these changes.

Leaders and managers provide effective specialist provision and vocational courses for learners with high needs. These provide these learners with helpful opportunities to become more independent, develop work-related skills and follow routes into employment through the supported internship programme. Leaders and managers have effective processes in place to ensure that learners with high needs receive the right level of personal and medical care as outlined in their education, health and care plans. They commission and coordinate specialist support to enable learners to actively engage in all elements of the curriculum. Most learners with high needs complete their courses and progress to further learning or work.

Most learners and apprentices produce work which is at least of the required standard or better. Level 3 performing arts and production teachers challenge learners to experiment with techniques outside their comfort zones, such as improvisation, and, as a result, learners express themselves individually and push themselves to produce practical work of a high standard. Apprentices in level 3 electrical installation demonstrate a good understanding of the terminology associated with the electrical sector to explain the more complex practical tasks they complete.

In most areas, a high proportion of learners and apprentices achieve their qualifications. However, there are a few areas where achievement has been too low as leaders have recognised. For example, on apprenticeship programmes, particularly at Selby, too few apprentices completed their programmes successfully. Since the merger, leaders have responded swiftly to this, accurately identifying areas of concern such as weaknesses in teaching practice, off-the-job training and target setting, and have put sensible improvement actions in place. As a result of these interventions, achievement rates for apprentices are improving. In addition, the proportion of learners at Wakefield who leave their A-level programmes before completing has been high across too many subjects. Leaders are taking action to improve retention through, for example, more effective initial advice and guidance.

Leaders and managers have good oversight of most aspects of the provision. They conduct a range of activities to evaluate the quality of teaching and the progress that learners are making and use their findings to inform the training that they provide for staff. Following the merger, leaders have taken decisive action to address areas that needed to improve at Selby College. However, the full impact of these actions has not yet been realised, and provision at Selby College is not yet at the consistently high standard seen at the other colleges.

Leaders and managers support staff well to ensure that their occupational and teaching skills are current. They provide staff with a wide range of relevant training to develop their teaching expertise and industry knowledge. This includes essential

training and reading, development days, conferences and formal training. Staff receive individual support to develop their practice from the college's high-performance advisers. Staff who are new to the college follow an induction programme tailored to their role, which supports them to feel valued and to be successful in their role.

Leaders and managers promote a culture that is supportive and inclusive and encourages collaborative working across the group and the pooling of resources. Where managers identify that workload is high, they take appropriate action to reduce it. Leaders and managers provide effective support to teachers at Selby College to enable them to adapt to the different operating model of the merged college group. As a result, staff at Selby feel part of the college group, which has a positive impact on the experience of their learners.

Leaders have in place a carefully structured and effective governance model. Governors have a thorough understanding of the group's strengths and areas for improvement. They receive comprehensive reports that enable them to monitor performance and quality effectively. They provide strong oversight, challenge and support to ensure that leaders make good progress in tackling identified issues. Governors have a good knowledge of local needs and actively participate in the curriculum planning process to ensure that the curriculum is designed to meet the needs of the area.

## **Safeguarding**

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

### **What does the provider need to do to improve?**

- Maintain the focus on improving apprenticeship provision, particularly at Selby College, to enable apprentices to develop the knowledge, skills and behaviours that they need to succeed in their chosen career pathways.
- Take action to reduce the number of learners on A-level courses at Wakefield who leave their courses early.
- Ensure that all teachers use learners' and apprentices' starting points effectively to plan relevant new learning.

## **Provider details**

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<b>Website</b>	<a href="http://www.wakefield.ac.uk">www.wakefield.ac.uk</a>
<b>Principal, CEO or equivalent</b>	Sam Wright
<b>Provider type</b>	General further education college
<b>Date of previous inspection</b>	4 to 7 December 2018
<b>Main subcontractors</b>	Not applicable

## Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the executive director of quality and curriculum, 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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