

Lakes College Cumbria

General Further Education College

Inspection dates

6–9 October 2015

Overall effectiveness

Requires improvement

Effectiveness of leadership and management	Requires improvement
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Requires improvement
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Requires improvement
Outcomes for learners	Requires improvement
16 to 19 study programmes	Requires improvement
Adult learning programmes	Requires improvement
Apprenticeships	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Good

Summary of key findings

This is a provider that requires improvement

- Leaders and managers have not been successful in improving overall outcomes or the quality of learning for all students; not enough students aged 16 to 19 achieve their qualifications.
- Managers do not set performance management targets for teachers routinely.
- Quality management is not sufficiently robust.
- Self-assessment is not consistently reliable.
- Too few students on study programmes are able to take advantage of work experience.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are not consistently good.
- Too few students in classroom-based learning improve their skills or achieve qualifications in English and mathematics.
- Not enough students enter employment, further education or training after leaving college.

The provider has the following strengths

- The college curriculum is highly responsive as a result of innovative work with strong employer partnerships.
- Learners benefit from good teaching, learning and assessment in practical lessons and apprenticeships.
- Students with high needs and others who need extra help develop independence and achieve challenging goals.
- Apprentices make good progress and a high number achieve fully employed status on completion of their training.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Lakes College in West Cumbria is a medium-sized general further education college with one main campus where all the study programmes take place for 16 to 19-year-old students, together with a small part of the adult full-time provision. Most adult provision is part time and/or distance learning, with a few courses in the local area for unemployed adults to improve their employability skills. Many apprentices attend college for their off-the-job training. The college has reduced the number of subcontractors who provide apprenticeship training and now works with two, mainly with older apprentices in health and social care and business.

At the time of the inspection around 2,600 students, including 850 apprentices, were studying at the college. Of the total, approximately 1,250 were full-time students, most aged 16 to 19, with around 300 adults. The remaining 500 adult learners were on part-time courses. Around 400 learners joined the college without a GCSE at grade C or above in English and mathematics. While unemployment in Cumbria is lower than the average for the North West region, the college catchment area includes wards with very high rates of unemployment.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Set clear targets for teachers, linked to key college performance indicators, in order to promote individual accountability for improvement.
- Establish clear quality management strategies to support quality improvement, promote high standards and raise students' outcomes.
- Improve the rigour of self-assessment by ensuring that judgements are precise, accurate, supported by valid evidence and lead to good-quality improvement planning that has an impact on raising standards.
- Ensure that all students on study programmes are able to take advantage of high-quality tutorials, careers guidance and work experience.
- Improve teaching, learning and assessment by:
 - taking quick action to ensure that teachers have high expectations of what their learners can achieve
 - providing more stimulating learning activities in classroom-based sessions
 - improving feedback to students so that they understand accurately how to improve their work.
- Develop students' skills in English and mathematics and ensure that more of them make good progress and achieve qualifications in these key subjects. Increase the proportion of students aged 16 to 19 who achieve their main learning aim and qualification.
- Increase the number of classroom-based students who enter jobs, further training and education after they leave college.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management requires improvement

- Leaders and managers have not made sufficient impact on improving outcomes, with the exception of apprenticeships; they recognise this to be the case. Based on the college's own data, success rates improved in 2014/15, following a previous two-year decline. Overall success rates for classroom-based learning are below levels achieved in the previous two years and require improvement.
- Self-assessment requires improvement. Although the college correctly assessed its outcomes as requiring improvement, departmental self-assessments are inconsistent and many are not of a good standard. In many, judgements and the evidence to justify the grades are not clear. The college self-assessment report has correctly identified some strengths but has overstated others, so that improvements to the quality of provision have not been made sufficiently quickly.
- Tackling the poor performance of a minority of teachers requires improvement; the quality of appraisals is too variable in terms of detail and evaluation of teachers' performance. Most appraisals do not have clearly measurable individual teacher targets linked to key college performance indicators and measures such as attendance and student success rates; consequently they are not sufficiently focused on individual accountability to improve outcomes.
- Quality assurance is not effective because it has not identified the inconsistencies in the departmental self-assessments and performance management reviews, the overgrading of lesson observations and the underperformance in subcontracted provision.
- Study programmes require improvement. Managers have correctly identified in the college's most recent self-assessment that employability is not promoted sufficiently in study programmes. Too few students have the opportunity to undertake work placements and too few have taken advantage of independent careers guidance. This has a negative impact on how many students enter employment or further education or training.
- Equality and diversity are promoted adequately through teaching and learning. Managers have offered extensive training to staff but the college recognises that further progress is needed to promote equality and diversity more consistently and to help prepare students for life in modern Britain. Managers have identified some gaps in performance but have not identified the significant differences in the number of male and females who leave college and enter employment, further training and education and consequently have not planned to reduce these.
- The Principal shares with governors and staff a clear vision and passionate commitment to provide outstanding outcomes for learners which lead to higher levels of learning. Together they collaborate in high-profile strategic partnerships at a local, regional and national level. As a result the college has developed a responsive, collaborative and innovative curriculum which is tailored to current and future locally identified employment skills needs.
- The college offers a broad vocational curriculum delivered in many state-of-the-art facilities such as the new construction centre and the science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) academy. Managers have introduced more advanced courses to secure student progression and to better meet local employer needs. Six students successfully reached the final of the WorldSkills competition in 2015.
- The senior team has invested heavily in improving teaching and learning, with many new appointments to English and mathematics and to the STEM academy. Planned professional development is clearly linked to the outcomes of the observations of teaching and learning and other improvement requirements arising from performance management. However, this has not yet reduced sufficiently the variability in teaching and learning and student outcomes.
- **The governance of the provider**
 - Governance is good. An experienced and knowledgeable team of governors is committed to raising standards in the college and ensuring that the college is able to play a full role at the heart of its local community.
 - Governors receive regular reports on college performance and mainly offer good support and challenge to the senior team, although this is not always sufficiently focused on academic performance.
 - Strong and prudent financial management has enabled managers to offer a responsive and sustainable curriculum at the same time as investing in excellent facilities for learning.

■ The arrangements for safeguarding are effective

- The college has excellent links with external agencies to secure a smooth and well-supported transition to college for those students who require it.
- Support staff offer exceptional care to students who have safeguarding concerns before, during and occasionally after they are students at the college.
- The college has introduced a valuable, well-used and monitored social media site for safe communication between staff and students. Students say they feel safe.
- Leaders and managers have kept themselves well informed with regard to the 'Prevent' strategy and are aware of the duties specified in the recently introduced legislation regarding terrorism. Staff training and planning to reinforce students' understanding of the risks are under way.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement

- Too many students make slow progress towards their qualifications and not enough students, particularly those on 16 to 19 study programmes, achieve their qualifications. On the apprenticeship programme, teaching, learning and assessment are good, and the majority of apprentices achieve their apprenticeships.
- In a significant minority of subject areas, teachers' expectations of what students can achieve are too low. In many subject areas, including health and social care and business and public services, teaching frequently does not take into account students' starting points or challenge students to achieve or exceed their targets. The number of students who make progress from their starting points to their next steps requires improvement.
- In a small minority of lessons, students complete activities that are at least one level below the standard of work expected of them. Consequently, too few students achieve high grades.
- Tutorials are ineffective for students on classroom-based programmes. Targets set with students lack challenge and are often based on completion of work rather than the development of skills. In a small minority of cases, deadlines for completion of targets are missed; teachers do not raise this issue with students and fail to promote swift progress. Tutorials for apprentices are effective and support the good progress they make.
- Too often, teachers plan and use learning activities that do not meet the individual needs of all students. In a significant minority of lessons, the pace is too slow, which results in students losing interest in activities and disrupting those that are trying to work by talking and using inappropriate behaviour.
- Teaching, learning and assessment are often good or better in practical lessons. Students are enthused, motivated and eager to apply skills in a practical context. Students develop practical and technical skills well, such as in welding and bricklaying, where high-quality work is produced frequently and progress is consistently good and often outstanding.
- Apprentices benefit from good-quality training both at college and in the workplace, which enables the majority to achieve their apprenticeships. Highly effective partnerships with employers ensure that the individual needs of apprentices and employers are met successfully. Employers are involved in the planning of apprenticeships and contribute well to the training of apprentices. Consequently, apprentices make good progress in their learning.
- Students' development of English and mathematics skills on 16 to 19 study programmes and apprenticeships requires improvement. For example, managers have set whole-college targets for the improvement of students' spelling, punctuation and grammar. However, teachers do not consistently identify errors or help students to correct spelling, punctuation and grammar in class or on written work.
- Apprentices and students develop the technical and personal skills needed for employment well in practical sessions. For example, students on joinery programmes use a range of specialist techniques and apply mathematical skills to ensure that they are able to fit doors correctly.
- Support for students who need extra help is highly effective. High levels of challenge in lessons for students with high needs result in them making very good progress towards their learning goals.
- Teachers' feedback to students in lessons and following assessment of written work is not always sufficiently detailed, and as a result, students do not always know what they need to do to improve. In a minority of areas, including adult distance learning and apprenticeships, feedback is clear and detailed and students know what they need to do to meet their targets.
- Students work well together and have respect for themselves and each other. However, teachers do not place enough emphasis on the development of students' understanding of living in a diverse society.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

require improvement

- Most students conduct themselves in line with the expectations and values held by the college, but attendance is low in too many lessons and too many students do not arrive on time. A few students' attitude to learning is inappropriate and they lack motivation, particularly where they do not feel stimulated or challenged by their learning activity.
- The majority of students develop good personal, social and motivational skills across all areas of the college's provision, with particularly good examples in practical subjects and apprenticeships. Most learners show respect for peers and staff and in their professional treatment of clients. Students develop good personal and social skills by taking part in team events, competitions, sport, external projects and enterprising activities in the community and at work.
- Ineffective planning of learning and a lack of interesting learning activities to motivate and challenge students in too many classroom-based lessons lead to a minority of students failing to concentrate. In a few cases this leads to low-level disruption and negative attitudes, particularly in tutorials and English and mathematics lessons. As a result students do not always make good progress and distract other students. The enthusiasm and motivation shown by students and apprentices in practical sessions is often not evident in the supporting theory sessions, which they frequently find boring.
- The majority of learners show good attitudes to learning, particularly in practical sessions, where students take pride in their work. A professional atmosphere pervades practical training, where students and apprentices in catering, construction, engineering, health and beauty work with confidence and skill.
- Support for students across all courses is good and most students enjoy college and value the support from teachers. The survey of students' views and feedback from students during the inspection confirmed this to be the case.
- Information, advice and guidance are available but their quality is not consistently good. A few students are enrolled on courses which do not challenge them to gain higher levels of knowledge and skills. In the study programme not all students take the opportunities available for impartial advice and guidance and therefore the impact of this support is limited.
- Individual sessions with mentors are valued and productive. Learners have very negative views about aspects of the tutorial content and the lack of direction when they are left unsupervised during tutorial time.
- Learners gain employability skills particularly well in practical and workshop sessions and through work experience when they take part. Short skills programmes for unemployed adults in sector-based work academies promote employability very effectively. However, across all of the classroom-based provision, insufficient numbers of students participate in meaningful work experience or work-related activity appropriate to their study programme and students are therefore not being fully prepared for the world of work. The college is working constructively to improve the volume and the quality of work experience in the current year and has employed specialist staff to support work experience development.
- Students benefit from a good range of opportunities to broaden and enrich their learning across the college and in subject areas. Learners respond well and take opportunities to develop skills outside of formal learning such as sports students accessing coaching qualifications and beauty students attending eyebrow threading and shaping courses. Students participate very successfully in skills competitions and contribute well to external catering functions, enterprises and practical projects.
- All learners demonstrate a good awareness of safety and generally report feeling safe at college and at work. In practical sessions they wear appropriate protective clothing when necessary and take responsibility for their safety and that of others. Learners benefit from the college's well used and monitored social media site for safe communication.

Outcomes for learners

require improvement

- The college correctly judged in the 2014/15 self-assessment report that outcomes for learners require improvement. The progress of students in too many classroom-based learning programmes is often slow, targets are insufficiently challenging and standards of work are not consistently good. The college was not able to provide any externally validated reports on students' progress.
- Students in practical lessons and apprentices often make good progress, and a few make very good progress, demonstrating mastery of high-level technical skills, and produce high standards of work.
- Too few classroom-based students achieve their qualifications. The success rate overall requires improvement. Based on data supplied by the college, the rate declined in 2014/15 for students aged 16 to 19 and was low. In 2014/15 outcomes in the largest programme area, care, sport and public services,

required improvement and the trend in five out of eight programme areas was judged by the college to be declining and below expected levels. Results were low in engineering, motor vehicle and science and in construction and civil engineering. In contrast, the second largest subject area, business development, improved and results were good. Managers did not collate information regarding high grade achievements.

- Full-time adult students' achievements require improvement. However, those on short distance-learning courses achieve well. At the time of the inspection the details of achievements by adult students on specific full-time courses were not available for 2014/15.
- Apprentices achieve well and make good progress. The standard of work produced by apprentices is good for the large majority and exceeds industry standards in a few cases. Employers value the contribution apprentices make in the workplace.
- A high proportion of students in receipt of high-needs funding achieve their qualification aims and make good progress. A number of other groups including those students who need extra help and those who have significant barriers to learning often make good progress. Many unemployed adults develop employability skills well; they make good progress and many successfully achieve English and mathematics qualifications.
- Not enough students progress to higher-level courses. The number of study programme students moving up from one level to the next is low overall and varies between subjects. For adults, the proportion of students progressing on from one level to the next is very low, including those progressing from classroom-based to apprenticeship programmes.
- Too few students aged 16 to 19 improve their English and mathematics skills quickly enough; the success rates on GCSE English and mathematics grades A* to C and functional skills are very low and have dropped below levels achieved in previous years. The proportion of older students who successfully achieve functional skills qualifications is low.
- The number of classroom-based students who leave college and move into employment, further education and training is not high enough; too many leave and become unemployed. The college's system for tracking classroom-based students' destinations' requires improvement. A very large majority of apprentices move into fully employed status on completion of their training.
- Leaders and managers have effectively closed the gap in performance between male and female apprentices that was evident in the 2013/14 success rates. They identified two further examples of achievement gaps in classroom-based learning in 2014/15 and have put appropriate actions in place to rectify the situation.
- The collection and analysis of destination data is limited and flawed, in some cases with unreliable data used for the self-assessment report and position statements. The large gap, identified during the inspection, between male and female students leaving college and entering employment, training or further education had not been previously recognised by the college.

Types of provision

16 to 19 study programmes

require improvement

- The college provides study programmes over a good range of subject areas, the largest areas are STEM, health and social care, early years and sport. There are currently 934 students on study programmes.
- The quality of teaching and learning on study programmes requires improvement. Too many lessons fail to meet the individual needs of all students. They lack pace and challenge and as a result students do not make the progress they should. This leads to students losing interest; a minority of students behave inappropriately.
- Students respond positively in well-planned and well-resourced practical sessions where they often make good progress and achieve good standards of work. Students find these lessons interesting and apply the skills they have learnt in the classroom.
- The quality of feedback on assessed work requires improvement in many subjects. Teachers do not mark work well enough to enable students to know how to improve their skills, knowledge and understanding. Targets for improvement are not specific enough to give them direction and support their progress.
- Tutorials do not effectively engage students and although one-to-one sessions with mentors are valued and productive, when they are taking place the remainder of the students in the classroom do not concentrate on the task set and do not use their time productively. Students do not see the value of some of the activities they are asked to complete in tutorial time.

- Initial advice and guidance are not always used effectively to guide students onto the correct level or course. Not enough students take the opportunity to benefit from impartial information, advice and guidance. The removal of A-level courses at the start of this academic year has meant that a small number of students are now seeking alternative career paths. A minority of students are repeating the same level of study programme and their progress is minimal.
- Retention on study programmes is generally good, but too few students achieve their learning goals, particularly their English and mathematics qualifications. The number of students who progress to destinations including higher and further education, employment or training requires improvement.
- Attendance and punctuality require improvement. Attendance at English and mathematics lessons is low. The development of students' skills in English and mathematics is poor; teachers do not always meet the needs of individual students and too few students make progress in these subjects.

Adult learning programmes

require improvement

- There are 844 adult students, with most participating part time on short courses. The minority are full-time students and they learn alongside students aged 16 to 19. Last year 650 students enrolled on distance-learning courses.
- Teaching and learning across the significant majority of full-time adult provision requires improvement. The vast majority of lessons lack pace and consequently students' progress is slow. Lessons are too frequently focused on completing low-level tasks. Teachers' expectations of what students can achieve lack sufficient challenge. Too many English and mathematics lessons lack clarity, pace and challenge. The direction of learning is not always clear and as a result students make insufficient progress. A minority of adult students, predominantly in practical lessons, benefit from good teaching, learning and assessment and receive good feedback on how to further improve and attain mastery of skills.
- College leaders and course tutors use well-established links with employers to ensure that the college provides a good range of courses that meet the needs of local employers, the community and individuals well. Students on these courses are mostly employed; a small minority are apprentices. Many achieve useful qualifications such as the Certificate in Mental Health Awareness.
- Employability courses improve the confidence of those with barriers to employment, motivate students and promote skills in how to seek and gain employment effectively. Many students on these courses gain functional skills qualifications in English and mathematics and become more ready for work. However, in spite of strong employer partnerships and the clear focus on employment, the rate at which adult students leave and get work is low.
- Information, advice and guidance are not consistently good across the full-time adult provision. Prior achievement is not always used effectively to inform course choice and a few students are enrolled on to courses at a level which does not build on their prior achievement. A small number feel unprepared for the university application process and students are not always enrolled onto English and mathematics courses that are necessary for their intended destination. The small number of students on the higher-education access programme benefit from advice and guidance that supports progression to university well.
- Retention across all adult provision is good and on short courses a high proportion of part-time students achieve their learning goals. The proportion of full-time adult learners who achieve qualifications, including functional skills, requires improvement.

Apprenticeships

are good

- The college has 849 apprentices with most in health and social care, business administration, engineering and motor vehicle. Small numbers of apprentices are following programmes in construction, ICT and leisure, travel and tourism.
- Management of the apprenticeship programme is good, as is the proportion of apprentices who succeed in gaining their qualification and entering full-time employment. Most apprentices currently in learning are making good or better progress towards achieving their qualifications within the planned time.
- College managers make good use of labour market intelligence and work with a variety of external partners to ensure that apprenticeships meet local, regional and national needs. Managers and employers collaborate effectively to provide flexible programmes that fit around apprentices' shift patterns and workplace activities. The provision meets the needs of employers and learners very well and is consistent with the principles and requirements of high standard apprenticeship programmes.

- Teaching, learning and assessment are good, both on and off the job. Many practical lessons are fast-paced, challenging and enjoyable. Teachers in these practical lessons have high expectations of their apprentices and provide excellent coaching based on their own extensive industry experience. Apprentices enjoy their time in the workshops, develop good safe working practices and critically evaluate and improve their own work. The teaching of theory and practice in welding is outstanding and provides an exceptional model for the teaching and learning of craft skills.
- In contrast to the good and often excellent practical lessons in most areas, a minority of theory lessons are too often slow, dull and lack challenge and imagination. Teachers do not give sufficient consideration to the best way to help their apprentices to learn and enjoy their theory lessons. Teachers and learners have low expectations of these lessons.
- The teaching and learning of mathematics and English have recently improved; this has resulted in increased success rates in functional skills. However, a few teachers fail to provide sufficiently effective and imaginative learning to challenge apprentices to enjoy and develop their English and mathematics skills.
- Apprentices in all areas develop good technical and personal skills. For example, many apprentices in health and social care develop good skills in administering and managing medication and expertise in end-of-life care. Apprentices in engineering develop specialised skills in computer-aided design (CAD) and customer services apprentices deal efficiently with clients in large, busy reception areas. One group of apprentices from a small engineering company undertake specialist projects such as renovating racing cars and ride-on mowers. Most business administration apprentices develop additional skills in team building.
- Assessment is good both on and off the job. Apprentices benefit from detailed and helpful feedback, accurate marking and a quick turnaround of marked work. Assessors have high expectations of their apprentices. For example, in health and social care most apprentices are encouraged to critically review and amend their assessed work to provide better and more substantial answers.
- Apprentices' destinations are good, with many moving on to higher learning or employment. For example, 8 out of 10 apprentices secured full permanent employment in 2014; many progress from intermediate to advanced level apprenticeships. Many apprentices benefit from additional qualifications to help them progress and become valuable members of the workforce.

Provider details

Type of provider	General further education college
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	5,000
Principal/CEO	Mr Chris Nattress
Website address	www.lcwc.ac.uk

Provider information at the time of the inspection

Main course or learning programme level	Level 1 or below		Level 2		Level 3		Level 4 and above	
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	246	142	326	498	379	168	7	12
Number of apprentices by Apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	119	280	118	287	2	43		
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	0		0		0			
Number of learners aged 14–16	NA							
Funding received from	Education Funding Agency and Skills Funding Agency							
At the time of inspection the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ VSS ■ Progress to Excellence 							

Information about this inspection

Inspection team

Derrick Spragg, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
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Kathy Passant	Ofsted Inspector
Ruth Szolkowska	Ofsted Inspector
Susanne Maher	Ofsted Inspector
Andrea Murphy	Ofsted Inspector
John Dunn	Ofsted Inspector

The above team was assisted by the Deputy Principal, as nominee, and carried out the inspection at short notice. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. Inspectors used group and individual interviews, telephone calls and online questionnaires to gather the views of students and employers; these views are reflected within the report. They observed learning sessions, assessments and progress reviews. The inspection took into account all relevant provision at the provider.

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