

Bowling College

Independent learning provider

Inspection dates

6–9 December 2016

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

Summary of key findings

This is an inadequate provider

- Safeguarding is ineffective.
- Directors and managers have failed to tackle effectively any of the recommendations from the last inspection.
- Directors' and managers' failure to implement funding guidelines has placed the college in a difficult financial position, with the result that there is a lack of resources to undertake crucial quality improvements.
- There are too few directors to hold the chief executive officer to account for his actions, and the few that there are have fulfilled their roles ineffectively.
- The proportion of adult learners who achieve their qualifications has declined significantly over the last three years.
- Very few apprentices achieve their qualifications.
- Performance management of teachers and assessors is weak.
- Too few learners make sufficient progress in the development of their English and mathematical skills, and only a minority achieve qualifications in these subjects.
- Directors and managers do not develop a curriculum that helps learners to progress further in education or secure employment.
- Managers and teachers fail to plan teaching and learning well enough to ensure that learners make good progress, achieve their learning goals and progress to the next qualification level.
- Teachers and assessors do not set challenging enough targets to broaden learners' skills, increase their understanding of the topics they study and enable them to achieve their potential.
- The training, guidance and assessment that apprentices receive do not help them to develop the work-related skills and knowledge needed to complete their apprenticeships successfully.

The provider has the following strengths

Staff reach out effectively to recruit learners from minority ethnic communities.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Bowling College is a not-for-profit limited company that offers full-time and part-time courses for adults in Bradford and the wider West Yorkshire area. The company has two directors, one of whom is the chief executive officer. The college delivers courses from entry-level to access to higher education programmes. Nearly a third of its English and mathematics courses are delivered through distance learning. The college has recently started to offer apprenticeships in health and social care and business administration.
- Bradford is the eleventh most deprived local authority in the country. The people of Bradford are lower-paid and less well qualified than those in neighbouring authorities. Minority ethnic communities make up nearly a quarter of the total population of Bradford. Sixty per cent of residents in the Manningham ward, in which the college is based, are from the British Asian Pakistani community.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Directors need to ensure that all new staff who require Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks receive their checks before they come into contact with young and vulnerable learners, unless they are properly supervised.
- Directors and managers should install effective firewalls to prevent learners from being able to access inappropriate materials on the internet.
- Directors and managers should ensure that all staff carry out refresher training on their safeguarding responsibilities, including those under the 'Prevent' duty.
- Directors and managers need to establish effective relationships with the local authority and local police 'Prevent' coordinators.
- Directors should revisit the areas for improvement from the last inspection, and make sure that they make rapid progress in tackling them, particularly the lack of an evaluative self-assessment process and an observation system for teaching, learning and assessment that drives improvement.
- Directors and managers should ensure that all learners and apprentices meet the requirements of funding bodies and that learners and apprentices receive their full entitlements while on courses, so that all available funding can be claimed to invest in improving the quality of the provision.
- The expertise of the directors on the board of the limited company needs to be increased and strengthened so that the chief executive officer can be held to account more effectively for the performance of the provider.
- Directors need to establish rigorous arrangements to manage the performance of managers, teachers and assessors and to support them to improve.
- Directors and managers need to be more strategic in how they plan the college's curriculum, basing it on identified employer priorities and an analysis of programmes that secure positive outcomes for learners, rather than on short-term funding decisions.

- All staff need to increase the proportion of adult learners and apprentices who achieve their qualifications by:
 - using information on the starting points of learners and apprentices more effectively to plan learning to meet the specific needs of individuals
 - identifying the support needs of learners and responding more quickly by providing appropriate levels of additional learning support
 - monitoring the progress of learners and apprentices more effectively, and providing support to those learners and apprentices who fall behind
 - setting targets that are more specific and challenging, so learners and apprentices can develop their skills and deepen their understanding of the topics they study
 - providing more classroom-based and one-to-one tuition to support learners to develop their English and mathematical skills more effectively, particularly for those learners on distance learning programmes
 - ensuring that written and verbal feedback to learners and apprentices provides them with constructive information on what they need to change to improve.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Inadequate

- Directors are responsible for a significant deterioration in the quality of provision since the last inspection. The chief executive officer has not provided effective oversight or support to his staff, many of whom have left due to poor morale. This has compounded the problems brought about by falling achievement rates for learners and a collapse in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Directors have lost access to funding and placed the college under significant financial pressure through a failure to implement basic regulations about learner eligibility and entitlements. As a result, there are now insufficient resources available to support improvements to teaching, learning and assessment. At the time of the inspection, a number of apprentices did not have an assessor and essential DBS checks were not obtained, in an attempt to save money.
- Self-assessment is insufficiently evaluative and does not identify accurately the key areas of improvement that inspectors identified. The latest quality improvement plan relates to the 2014/15 academic year. As a result, directors and managers have been unable to identify how they can improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment or the outcomes that learners achieve.
- There are currently no processes in place to monitor the quality of provision. Previous observations of teaching and learning focused too much on what the teacher was doing rather than the effectiveness of learning. There are no mechanisms in place to provide developmental feedback to staff and there are no specific actions to aid improvement. Consequently, staff do not receive support to develop their practice.
- Performance management is non-existent. Directors do not have any performance management records relating to current members of staff. No links exist between the outcomes of teaching and learning observations and appraisals. As a result, no targets are set for staff to improve their performance, and no training is identified to support them to develop.
- Directors' planning of the curriculum is weak. The business plan does not focus well enough on ensuring that the curriculum meets local needs and priorities. Too many courses change from year to year without any obvious rationale beyond funding constraints; for example, the access to higher education programme has been removed and then reintroduced in successive years. The only exception is the recent successful partnership to attract a large number of young, Asian, female learners onto beauty therapy courses in Batley and Bradford.
- Directors' implementation of new strategies has been very weak. They have been inept in their application of the new requirements for English and mathematics, enrolling too many ineligible learners onto courses at the wrong level. There has been too little management oversight over the introduction of apprenticeships until very recently. As a result, only one apprentice out of 35 has successfully completed a qualification.

The governance of the provider

- Directors have failed to act on a recommendation from the last inspection to strengthen the board to enable them to hold senior managers to account for the performance of the

organisation. As the chief executive officer is one of only two current directors on the board, there is no effective constitutional or practical method for scrutinising his actions. As a result, the board has been powerless to prevent the decline in standards since the last inspection.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are ineffective.
- The chief executive officer does not take sufficient responsibility for monitoring the arrangements to keep learners safe.
- Directors do not apply safe recruitment practices effectively. As a result, the college's policy for completing DBS checks has not been followed; members of staff without DBS checks have been left to work unsupervised with learners for too long.
- The current arrangements for monitoring online activity and the promotion of how learners keep themselves safe online are ineffective. Access to internet sites which could enable learners to research extremist-related topics is not blocked or challenged.
- The designated safeguarding lead has received appropriate training on the 'Prevent' duty, but engagement with the local authority and local police 'Prevent' coordinators is insufficient. Directors have not ensured that enough staff are trained to understand their responsibilities under the 'Prevent' duty.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Inadequate

- Learners make poor progress. Directors, teachers and assessors do not monitor learners closely enough to ensure that they progress at the right pace. In particular, they do not ensure that the most able learners are able to extend their skills and achieve the highest standards possible. Apprentices do not receive sufficient guidance or teaching to ensure that they make at least good progress over time and achieve their qualifications.
- Teachers do not use assessment information effectively to devise strategies to help learners to achieve their qualifications. For the majority of current learners, teachers identify the correct level at which learners should be studying. However, teachers and assessors do not use the assessment of learners' starting points effectively to plan learning or to set individual targets so that learners and apprentices can achieve their full potential.
- Support for learners with additional needs is weak. Where learners declare a potential learning support need, such as having poor mental health or a specific learning difficulty, teachers do not record any subsequent discussions about how the college can provide the necessary support. The reasons for learners' poor achievement are not analysed. As a result, many of these learners do not stay to complete their qualifications.
- Teachers' and assessors' written and verbal feedback, although full of encouragement, is too general and does not specify the positive elements of learners' work or give clear and measurable improvement targets to enable learners to progress further.
- Directors and managers do not have an overview of the progress made by learners while on their courses. For example, course teachers hold information about the progress of current learners on beauty therapy courses, including learners who started in 2015/16, but do not pass this information to managers. Too often, managers treat attendance as a

measure of progress, rather than using learner records to inform them of how well learners are progressing.

- Teachers use too narrow a range of resources to help learners develop the English and mathematics skills that they need to be successful.
- Most teachers and assessors are suitably qualified and, where appropriate, have recent relevant occupational experience. Most teachers draw on their experiences to motivate learners, providing practical examples to demonstrate how the skills and knowledge that learners acquire will help them to progress into employment or on to a higher level of qualification.
- Adult learners attending the college are motivated and enthusiastic; they are keen to learn and proud of their achievements. Teachers have high expectations of their learners and the work that they set is appropriate to the level of study. However, opportunities for the most able learners to extend their knowledge and skills are very limited.
- Teachers and managers carefully consider and act upon learners' spiritual and cultural needs. For example, the adult learning manager altered the timings of one class to enable learners to pray at their preferred time.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

- Teachers do not reinforce or promote English or mathematics adequately in vocational sessions. Attempts to enable learners to understand the importance of English and mathematics skills to their long-term goals or aspirations are unsuccessful. Teachers do not make good use of the wealth of opportunities to develop learners' mathematical skills in practical sessions to increase their confidence and competence.
- The use of impartial careers information, advice and guidance to plan learners' next steps is weak. Current learners have a very poor awareness of how to access the careers advice service. As a result, they often rely on their personal knowledge or information from friends and family members. Managers recently reintroduced formal regular contact with the local provider of employability training and guidance for adults. Learners attending the recruitment day for childcare apprenticeships received clear practical guidance on the services and support offered by the local National Careers Service provider.
- Attendance has improved since the last inspection, but remains too low. Two out of every 10 learners were absent from classes in 2015/16, with significant variation across programme areas.
- Learners' knowledge and awareness of how to keep themselves safe from risks of radicalisation and extremism and how to keep themselves safe online is incomplete. If a learner misses an induction session, where safeguarding and the risks of radicalisation are covered, teachers rarely recap these topics at a later stage.
- Learners feel safe and valued by all college staff. They know who to raise concerns with if they are anxious or find their studies difficult. They are confident that college staff will take their concerns seriously and, where appropriate, take any necessary action.
- Learners who are returning to learning or have had previous negative experiences quickly develop the confidence and motivation to learn new skills. Learners attending the centre

in Batley are very positive about their learning and optimistic about their employment prospects.

- Learners use technical and specialist language appropriately and with confidence. They have a good understanding of relevant health and safety regulations and the consequences of failing to follow good health and safety practice. For example, beauty therapy learners took part in a detailed discussion about the steps necessary for ensuring that treatments using chemicals are safe and suitable for clients, and the law relating to providing particular treatments for young people.
- Apprentices who stay on their programmes improve their confidence and develop good work-related skills that enable them to make a valuable contribution to the workplace. For example, apprentices working in reception areas quickly gain confidence when answering the telephone and dealing with customer enquiries. Apprentices working in nurseries gain confidence in supporting young children with the early stages of development, such as in creative play.
- Adult learners understand why the values of democracy, rule of law, individual liberty respect and tolerance are important aspects of living in modern Britain. However, assessors do not reinforce apprentices' awareness of British values effectively, so they do not see the relevance of these values to their everyday lives.

Outcomes for learners

Inadequate

- Directors and managers have overseen a persistent decline in the proportion of learners who achieve their qualifications. The majority of learners do not acquire the skills and knowledge to enable them to progress further into education and employment, or to advance their careers.
- In 2014/15, achievement among adult learners fell significantly to well below the national rate. Achievement rates declined across most qualifications, including those at levels 2 and 3.
- In 2015/16, there was a further fall in the achievement of adults. Too many learners were ineligible for funding because managers and staff enrolled them on qualifications at levels that they had already achieved, or did not have appropriate records to show that they had been in learning. Too many adult learners leave their course before the end. Only just over a half of learners remained on courses to achieve their qualifications.
- The proportion of apprentices who achieve their qualification is extremely low. In 2015/16, none of the 29 apprentices completed their qualification. In the current year, only one of the six apprentices due to finish their qualification has been successful. No apprentices have achieved within the planned time.
- Too few learners make good progress in the development of their English and mathematical skills, and too few achieve their qualifications in these subjects. Very few learners on an English and mathematics distance learning programme completed the qualification, due to poor levels of support.
- Managers do not collect sufficient information on learners' destinations to enable them to evaluate how effective the curriculum is in meeting the needs of learners and employers.
- Managers do not analyse or act on gaps in attainment between groups of learners. The

gap between the achievement rates of male and female learners remains stubbornly high. Learners with learning difficulties have progressed less well than learners without learning difficulties over the last two years.

- Only a very small minority of learners progress onto higher-level qualifications while they are at the college. In 2015/16, only 20 learners out of a total of 660 progressed between qualification levels.

Types of provision

Adult learning programmes

Inadequate

- A total of 253 adults study on both full-time and part-time courses at the college main site or at the centre in Batley. The most substantial programmes are beauty therapy and functional skills English and mathematics, a significant proportion of which is through distance learning.
- The proportion of adult learners, particularly those on English and mathematics courses, who achieve their qualifications has declined over the last three years and is too low.
- Directors and managers do not plan an effective curriculum that meets the needs of adult learners. A significant minority of adult learners study on a distance-learning English and mathematics course, which does not prepare them well enough for their examinations. As a result, the majority of current learners have reached the planned end of their programme without achieving their qualifications.
- Teachers do not use the findings of initial assessment to plan and deliver sessions that meet learners' individual needs. Most learners carry out the same activities irrespective of their starting points, and learners of different abilities all work at the same pace.
- Teachers do not set targets and monitor learners' progress sufficiently well to ensure that learners make the progress of which they are capable. It is, therefore, impossible for the directors and managers of the college to judge the pace of progress of learners or to measure if learners are achieving their full potential.
- Initial advice and guidance are weak. Information about learners' prior attainment is not always collected or used to ensure that learners are placed on the correct programme. Learners have limited access to impartial advice and guidance to support them with their planned next steps.
- The quality of teachers' feedback on learners' work is poor. Too many learners do not receive sufficiently informative feedback to enable them to understand the steps they need to take to improve the standard of their work.
- Teachers successfully foster a sense of well-being and give high levels of care and support to their learners. This develops learners' confidence in their ability to learn and creates a positive learning environment which enables learners to ask questions and so extend their understanding of key topics.
- Learners display positive attitudes to learning. They work collaboratively with peers from very diverse backgrounds in an ethos of mutual respect. Learners enjoy learning and demonstrate good standards of behaviour. They arrive prepared for learning and take pride in their work.

- Learners feel safe while learning at the college. They are aware of how to report any concerns. In beauty therapy, learners can articulate well their understanding of fundamental British values such as the rule of law and how it applies to their chosen area of study.

Apprenticeships

Inadequate

- The college has 52 apprentices currently on health and social care, childcare and business administration programmes. There are 22 apprentices on intermediate programmes, 23 on advanced programmes and seven on higher-level programmes. Almost all apprentices are adults.
- Directors and managers do not plan or deliver apprenticeship programmes effectively. Too many apprentices have not completed their apprenticeships successfully in the past year because of inadequate planning, disrupted training and weak assessment practice.
- Assessors and managers do not monitor apprentices' progress rigorously enough. Most apprentices make slow progress and do not complete their programmes within the planned timescales. The lack of accurate and reliable management information means that staff do not intervene quickly enough to support apprentices to succeed. Recent management changes have not yet had sufficient impact on the progress, retention and completion rates of apprentices.
- Managers and assessors do not plan on- and off-the-job learning in conjunction with employers to ensure that apprenticeship programmes meet the statutory requirements. Assessors do not liaise routinely with employers when planning training and assessment to ensure that all apprentices have a coherent training programme that enables them to progress quickly and achieve their full potential.
- Assessors do not provide sufficient support for learners to achieve the required level of English and mathematics for the apprenticeship programme. Assessors do not use the information gathered at the start of the programme well enough to plan learning that meets apprentices' English and mathematics learning needs. As a consequence, too many apprentices complete functional skills qualifications too late in their apprenticeship programme, and often after the planned end date for the qualification.
- Assessment is weak. Assessors do not set apprentices sufficiently clear and specific targets to ensure that they make good progress in their learning. Too many targets lack detail and focus on the collection of assessment evidence instead of assisting apprentices to plan and maximise their learning in the workplace.
- Too often, assessors do not provide apprentices with sufficiently detailed guidance to help them to improve the quality of their written work. Feedback does not identify precisely enough what apprentices have done well and what they need to do to improve.
- Staff do not develop apprentices' understanding of British values well enough. Apprentices are not aware of the risks of radicalisation and extremism.
- Apprentices benefit from good support from their employers. Apprentices develop good work-related skills and knowledge due to the training they receive at work. For example, social care apprentices sensitively support the emotional needs of service users suffering with dementia.

Provider details

Unique reference number	58766
Type of provider	Independent learning provider
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	659
Principal/CEO	Mr Steve Cross
Telephone number	01274 773310
Website	www.bowlingcollege.co.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 or above	
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+
	–	60	1	194	–	5	–	–
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	1	21	1	22	–		8	
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	–		3		3			
Number of learners aged 14 to 16	–							
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	–							
Funding received from:	Skills Funding Agency							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	–							

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the chief executive officer, as nominee. 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 learners 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.

Inspection team

Dr Charles Searle, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Nigel Evans	Her Majesty's Inspector
Ken Merry	Her Majesty's Inspector
Heather Hartmann	Ofsted Inspector
Maggie Fobister	Ofsted Inspector

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