

The Oldham College

General further education college

Inspection dates

16–19 January 2017

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

Summary of key findings

This is a provider that requires improvement

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment has improved but is not consistently good across all areas of provision; learners, particularly the most able, are not sufficiently challenged, and as a result, too few achieve the grades of which they are capable.
- Teachers' feedback to learners is not consistently effective in enabling them to improve the quality of their work; teachers do not always set specific and clear targets to help learners make rapid progress.
- Learners' attendance on study programmes is not yet high enough, particularly in English and mathematics lessons.
- Too few learners on 16 to 19 study programmes develop their English and mathematics skills well enough, improve their GCSE grade or achieve their qualifications.
- In spite of some improvements, leaders and managers have not secured sufficient improvement to ensure a consistently high standard across all the different types of provision.
- Not enough apprentices achieve their qualifications within their planned timescales and not enough adult learners complete their courses successfully.
- Governors require clearer information on learners' and apprentices' progress and achievement in order to challenge senior leaders effectively.
- Different groups of learners do not perform as well as they should when compared to their peers.

The provider has the following strengths

- Leaders, governors and managers work well with employers and other partners to inform and develop the curriculum, which is responsive to local needs and skills priorities.
- Leaders and managers work well to provide an inclusive environment for learners where staff focus strongly on developing the college values of respect and tolerance for different cultures.
- Learners' behaviour is good; they build positive relationships with their teachers and peers in an environment of mutual respect and tolerance.
- Decisive actions taken by leaders and managers have led to improvements in achievement rates for learners on 16 to 19 study programmes, adult programmes, apprentices and for learners with high needs.

Full report

Information about the provider

- The college serves the local community of Oldham. It offers provision in a wide range of subject areas. The college specialises in providing vocational training provision with courses from entry level to advanced level and apprenticeship programmes. Oldham is one of the most deprived local authorities in England. Over a third of learners attending the college are from the most deprived areas. Around half of learners at the college are from minority ethnic backgrounds. The proportion of pupils in Oldham at age 16 gaining five GCSEs at grades A* to C, including English and mathematics, is lower than that nationally.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Improve teaching, learning and assessment by:
 - ensuring that learners attend more frequently and attendance rates rise, especially in English and mathematics lessons
 - providing learners and apprentices with clear and specific feedback on their work that enables them to improve their skills, knowledge and understanding
 - ensuring that teachers and assessors set and agree with learners and apprentices specific and challenging targets for improvement that are then reviewed within agreed timescales
 - ensuring that teachers plan lessons carefully, taking into account the starting points of learners and apprentices, so that learning activities challenge all learners, including the most able.
- Increase the number of apprentices that achieve their qualification within the planned time.
- Increase the number of adults on vocational courses who complete their courses and achieve qualifications.
- Diminish the difference in achievement between different groups of learners so that all learners achieve equally well.
- Improve the development of learners' English skills and raise the pass rates in English and mathematics qualifications.
- Ensure that all learners and apprentices develop a wider understanding of the risks of radicalisation and extremism.
- Provide governors with clear and accurate information about learners' progress and achievement so they can challenge senior leaders more effectively.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- The principal, leaders, governors and managers are committed to an ambitious vision of providing a high-quality vocational college. They seek to develop highly employable learners from a variety of different backgrounds by enhancing learners' skills so that they can gain employment, improve their career prospects or progress to further study.
- Since the last inspection, the principal, leaders, governors and managers have improved the quality of provision, including the overall achievement rates of learners on 16 to 19 study programmes, apprentices and learners with high needs. However, the rates of improvement are not yet sufficient to be good and managers still have much work to do to achieve their objective of providing outstanding education and training for their learners.
- Leaders and managers use quality improvement strategies, including self-assessment, to identify weaker areas of provision. Significant improvements have been made in some areas, but there remains too much variability across the college. This is evident in the variation in outcomes between different subjects, by level of qualification, and learners' age, gender and disability.
- Areas for improvement at the last inspection have not been rectified in full. For example, while there are improvements in the quality of apprenticeship training and in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment they are not yet consistently good in all subject areas.
- Managers do not set clear targets for improvement where differences in achievement are apparent between groups of learners, for example for learners with a disability and/or learning difficulty, or differences based on age and gender. The equality and diversity group focuses on the promotion of equality and diversity matters, rather than focusing on strategies to improve outcomes for different groups of learners.
- While the self-assessment report identifies most areas requiring improvement accurately, senior leaders do not correlate learners' outcomes, which they judge as requiring improvement, with the quality of teaching, learning and assessment or with the effectiveness of leadership and management.
- Senior leaders use a comprehensive range of data to identify underperformance at course, curriculum and college level. However, the quality improvement plan does not include specific enough targets for senior leaders and governors to monitor performance effectively to ensure that low performance is swiftly improved. Reports on performance to governors often lack clarity; consequently, governors are unable to provide sufficient challenge to senior leaders.
- Managers have recognised that the curriculum for adults needed reviewing and in the most recent year have revised the range of courses delivered. However, it is too early for managers to evaluate the effectiveness of these measures in ensuring that more learners complete their programme.
- Managers provide effective staff development, which improves teachers' practice where it is weak. Teachers value the wide range of staff development and individual coaching that they receive to improve specific aspects of their teaching. Managers have recently started

to focus on how teachers can improve their practice further through the 'good to great' initiative, which encourages teachers to strive for excellence and share best practice.

- Most college staff who observe lessons provide reliable and accurate judgements of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. Managers use performance management processes effectively to ensure that teachers who do not improve their practice, following intensive support, leave the college.
- Senior leaders and managers ensure that close collaboration with schools, local partners and employers results in a well-planned, coherent curriculum. This meets the needs of local people in Oldham as well as employers and the priorities of the wider Greater Manchester region well. Senior leaders plan to reduce their reliance on the use of subcontractors to deliver apprenticeships, except where the college does not have the specific expertise to deliver the apprenticeship directly.
- Senior leaders and governors promote a highly inclusive ethos where learners are tolerant of each other and behave responsibly. Learners and staff demonstrate a culture that aligns well to British values such as tolerance and respect for others. Learners of different cultures and backgrounds work harmoniously together. Equality and diversity are promoted well and learners take part in a number of activities to increase their cultural awareness.

The governance of the provider

- Governors have a good range of business and financial skills, experience and expertise to support senior leaders effectively; however, not enough governors have a good understanding of matters relating to education and learning.
- Governors understand most aspects of the college well, but are not always clear about specific areas requiring improvement. For example, they do not yet have a good grasp of the differences in the performance of different groups of learners. Governors analyse the extensive data and performance information they receive from leaders, but the clarity of the information they receive does not enable governors to carry out their role effectively in terms of providing challenge to leaders and effect more rapid improvement.
- Governors' good links with the community help leaders and managers develop a clear vision for the college and the curriculum.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Managers maintain an accurate and up-to-date single central record of the staff checks made during recruitment. Designated safeguarding officers ensure that all staff have introductory and refresher training on safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty.
- Strong and effective partnerships exist with the local safeguarding team and voluntary organisations. Staff respond quickly and appropriately to any safeguarding concerns raised by learners.
- Learners demonstrate a good awareness of how to work safely in college workshops and in their workplace. Learners know how to keep themselves safe when using the internet and social media.
- Teachers use opportunities in lessons and group tutorials to raise learners' awareness of the dangers of radicalisation and extremism, and of British values, in group tutorials and

in lessons. Most learners have a basic understanding of these concepts but cannot always link the issues to their personal lives or the workplace.

- Designated safeguarding officers are well informed about potential risks to learners' safety. They make good use of local intelligence to protect learners from extremist views in college and develop appropriate training. Designated safeguarding officers are highly vigilant and report any of their concerns to the local 'Prevent' officer.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- Too many learners across all provision types are not making sufficiently timely progress towards achieving their qualifications or apprenticeships. Teaching, learning and assessment are not yet consistently good.
- Too many lessons are characterised by teachers not providing sufficient challenge for their learners and encouraging them to be more ambitious in what they can achieve. Learners make slow progress in lessons because teachers set work that is too easy, particularly for the most able learners. Learners are not challenged to develop and practise their skills quickly enough.
- Recent actions have taken place to improve the skills of teachers and assessors in setting clear targets for learners. However, too many teachers and assessors do not systematically set learners targets which are effective in helping learners to improve their work. Learners' and apprentices' targets are often vague and so they are not sufficiently detailed to help them understand what they need to do to improve.
- In courses specifically for high needs learners, their targets are not specific, challenging and detailed enough to confirm exactly what is expected of learners and enable them to make the progress of which they are capable.
- In many lessons, teachers do not ask sufficiently detailed questions to check the understanding of all learners. Teachers do not use effective questioning with their learners or use other assessment strategies to ensure that learners understand new concepts, develop high-level vocational skills and make good progress.
- Teachers' feedback on learners' work is not yet consistently good across provision types and subjects. Feedback is not clear enough to help learners know what needs to improve or how they can achieve at a higher level.
- Teachers do not ensure that learners correct mistakes in their written English. Consequently, too few learners develop their English skills quickly enough. Learners' written work is not routinely presented well; for example, advanced-level business studies learners do not produce work at the expected standard, and a small amount of learners' work in English is untidy. A few teachers make mistakes in their own work, which does not help the development of learners' skills in English. Written English skills for apprenticeships are not developed well.
- Teachers' promotion of mathematics within vocational programmes is not yet consistently good, so not all learners develop the mathematical skills and knowledge at a pace appropriate for their ability. Most learners on study programmes develop the expected mathematical skills based on their initial assessments, although learners cannot always apply what they have previously learned. On apprenticeship programmes, teachers and assessors help apprentices to develop good mathematical skills; for example, advanced

information technology (IT) apprentices analyse statistical health and safety data to identify accurately the frequency of accidents in the workplace.

- Teachers and assessors across all provision types use their industry or sector experience well to plan and manage appropriate learning activities that enable learners to understand new concepts, use terminology appropriately and develop industry-standard skills for their chosen career path. For example, learners on a level 2 sports certificate are able to describe the structure of the heart using correct terminology and trace the relevant blood vessels associated with blood flow to the lungs.
- Learners develop good practical vocational skills well across all provision types. For example, learners with high needs make trestle tables in carpentry classes, and learners on study programmes in hairdressing develop professional standards in the college's salons. Advanced IT apprentices can change a variety of different computer components very early on in their apprenticeship. Learners enjoy learning new skills and are proud of what they achieve.
- Staff identify learners who need additional support with their learning very effectively, at the start of the learners' programmes. This is particularly effective for learners with high needs, and there is good liaison between college staff and other agencies to ensure timely sharing of important information to help these learners with their transition into college life. Learner profile information is comprehensive and shared with teaching staff, who use it well to support learners in classes and workshops.
- Enthusiastic programme coaches support individual study programme learners very well through regular meetings. They offer learners practical advice on how to make progress in their learning and their employability skills, and monitor targets collaboratively with their learners. For example, a learner was encouraged to use online video tutorials to improve their English skills.
- Teachers set clear objectives at the start of lessons so that learners know what they should achieve. Teachers of English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) begin their lessons very effectively with interesting activities, which capture learners' attention from the very beginning and make their learning fun, with the result that their progress is good.
- Staff across the college develop learners' understanding of equality and diversity well. The college community is made up of people from a wide range of cultures and backgrounds. Teachers and assessors are very aware of the challenges brought by this diversity and are persistent in promoting British values of tolerance and respect by setting high standards for behaviour around the college. As a result, learners feel safe in the college.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

- Learners' attendance at lessons, although improving, is too low, especially for lessons leading to English and mathematics qualifications. Staff are using different methods well to encourage learners to improve their attendance, where it is not yet good enough.
- On apprenticeship programmes, learners make better progress with their mathematical skills than with their English skills. Assessors ensure that apprentices become confident with the specialist application of mathematics. Adult learners make better progress in

English and mathematics than learners on 16 to 19 study programmes.

- Staff provide a range of good information, advice and guidance to support learners in making career decisions; this help is provided prior to enrolment, during their studies and at the end of their course. Teachers and assessors use their industry and commercial experience very well to help learners and apprentices make informed decisions about their next steps in education, training or employment.
- Learners and apprentices develop a good understanding of how to work safely in a wide range of vocations. Consequently, they are able to use tools and equipment safely and confidently, and select and use appropriate personal protective equipment. Learners and apprentices feel safe and understand how to report any concerns. Learners and apprentices have insufficient understanding of the wider aspects of radicalisation and extremism.
- Learners develop a good understanding of keeping themselves healthy, and of mental health and well-being, by completing an online learning personal development programme.
- Learners' and apprentices' behaviour at and around college is good. They treat their environment, staff and other learners with respect. Learners and apprentices are tolerant of each other's differences and respect individuals from different cultures and backgrounds.
- Adult learners, particularly those on ESOL programmes, improve their confidence and self-esteem as they prepare for employment or further study. Learners with high needs make good progress in developing independence.
- Learners benefit from a wide range of additional activities, which include sport, cultural, health and well-being, and community activities. On 16 to 19 study programmes, learners are able to achieve additional qualifications, which improves their job prospects. For example, level 3 childcare learners complete a paediatric first aid certificate that helps them secure employment with a childcare provider.
- Community and charitable activities help learners to develop a greater awareness of the communities in which they live and work, and develop their employability skills. For example, learners arranged a Christmas market to raise money for local charities, developing good customer service skills, team working and organisational skills.
- Learners on vocational courses develop good practical skills in the college's commercial facilities and high-quality resources; for example, hairdressing and beauty therapy learners work in a commercial salon using industry standard equipment and products. A good range of enrichment activities are available, such as sports and college-based enterprise projects, that further develop teamwork and communication skills that employers value.
- Learners develop their practical skills and their skills for work through completing external work experience placements and work-related activities within college. High needs learners do not get sufficient opportunities for work experience.

Outcomes for learners

Requires improvement

- Learners on 16 to 19 study programmes, apprentices and learners with high needs are making better progress towards achieving their qualifications than in previous years, but not enough teachers yet have the high aspirations and ambitions needed for their learners to achieve their potential.
- In 2015/16, a much higher proportion of learners on 16 to 19 study programmes, including learners with high needs in vocational areas, achieved their qualifications. However, achievement varies too much across subject areas. For example, achievement was high on ESOL courses and performing arts courses but low in construction and employability courses.
- Overall achievement rates on apprenticeship programmes improved in 2015/16 to around the national average but a high proportion did not complete their programmes in the planned timescale. Actions taken to ensure that apprentices complete their qualification in the planned time are starting to have an impact and current apprentices are making better progress. Achievement rates for adult apprentices declined in 2015/16. Achievement rates for apprentices improved in the majority of subject areas in 2015/16 but hairdressing, construction, and education and training apprentices are more successful than their peers in subjects such as business administration, arts and media, and engineering and manufacturing technology programmes.
- Learners on 16 to 19 study programmes are improving their skills in English and mathematics from their starting points but too few learners improve their GCSE grades in their English and mathematics examinations. Learners' achievement of English and mathematics functional skills qualifications at levels 1 and 2 is too low; however, learners on qualifications below level 1 are more successful in achieving their qualifications. Adult learners are more successful in achieving English and mathematics qualifications than those aged 16 to 18.
- On ESOL courses, most adult learners achieve their qualifications. However, the achievement rates for adult learners on vocational courses in most subjects declined in 2015/16 and are below national rates.
- A high proportion of learners in receipt of high-needs funding achieve their vocational qualifications. They also make very good progress towards independence through the achievement of specific personal learning and behaviour goals. However, not enough learners develop their employability skills such as team working.
- The majority of learners and apprentices progress into positive destinations on completion of their course. Most apprentices who complete their programme successfully gain employment at the end of their apprenticeship. The majority of adult learners on access to higher education courses progress to higher education.
- Managers have recognised underachievement by different types of learners across different provision types but action plans to reduce the differences are not sufficiently clear.

Types of provision

16 to 19 study programmes

Requires improvement

- The college provides 16 to 19 study programmes in a wide range of vocational subjects. Currently, about 2,290 learners are on 16 to 19 study programmes, which account for around half of the college's provision, with the majority of learners enrolling at levels 1 and 2.
- Leaders and managers have implemented ambitious strategies to improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment in study programmes, but not all areas are consistently good. Teaching across the provision does not provide sufficient challenge to enable learners to make rapid progress.
- Although achievement rates in 2015/16 show an improvement in a significant number of subject areas, especially in level 3 provision, learners do not make expected rates of progress. In too many lessons, teachers use materials that are not appropriate for the level of learners, which means that they find the tasks too challenging and struggle to make progress, or not challenging enough, which limits their progress.
- Teachers do not consistently set clear targets to enable learners to make rapid progress. As a result, learners' targets are often limited to relatively short-term actions, which are insufficiently focused on learners' future aspirations or the progress they need to make towards achieving their qualification.
- Teachers' feedback to learners does not consistently inform learners what they need to do to improve or encourage them to improve their English skills faster by ensuring that learners correct their spelling errors. In a minority of cases, learners do not demonstrate appropriate care when completing written tasks and they lack pride in their work, with files being poorly presented.
- Most teachers use questions skilfully to develop learners' understanding of new topics; for example, in health and social care, teachers tease out learners' understanding of the theory of social issues which they apply to current examples and explore the causes of poverty and homelessness.
- Learners develop good technical and professional skills in practical lessons, preparing them well for progression and employment. For example, level 2 accountancy learners confidently use bookkeeping software and level 1 information and communication technology (ICT) learners demonstrate good skills in their use of image editing software.
- Learners' additional support needs are identified well. Teachers and support workers receive detailed and comprehensive individual learner information and guidance on how best to support their learners to meet their individual needs.
- Learners for whom work experience is appropriate benefit from placements with employers, which are planned well by designated work experience staff who ensure that placements are of good quality and purposeful in helping learners develop skills that employers value and their longer-term objectives.
- Managers have introduced strategies to improve mathematics and English lessons and current learners are making better progress in developing these skills given their starting points. Mathematics is not sufficiently reinforced during vocational lessons. Attendance is

poor in English and mathematics lessons.

- Teachers provide learners with high-quality personalised information, advice and guidance to help them progress to further study or employment in their subject areas.
- In practical lessons, learners demonstrate safe working practices to industrial standards. They show good awareness of safeguarding, including online safety. Learners' wider understanding of the dangers of radicalisation and extremism is not sufficiently developed.

Adult learning programmes

Requires improvement

- The college delivers adult learning programmes to approximately 1,089 learners and the large majority study part time. Learners study courses from entry level-to-level 3 in English and mathematics, ESOL, access to higher education and vocational subjects. Managers have reviewed the curriculum for adult learning programmes and are providing courses that are inclusive, appropriately planned and meet local needs. The largest curriculum areas are preparation for life and work which includes ESOL, English and mathematics.
- During 2015/16 the overall number of adults who successfully achieved their qualification declined and is lower than that the national rate. Attendance in too many lessons is low, resulting in poor progress for those learners who do not attend regularly.
- Learning activities do not always provide sufficient challenge to engage and motivate learners, particularly the most able, to achieve their potential. Consequently, adult learners do not make sufficient progress given their starting points.
- Teachers' checking and assessment of learners' understanding during lessons frequently lacks rigour so that too many learners do not develop their depth of knowledge and application of new skills, and their progress is slow. Teachers are too quick to accept and praise learners' basic answers, which are often poorly structured. Consequently, learning does not extend the knowledge and understanding or the capabilities of the most able learners.
- In a significant minority of cases, teachers' feedback on learners' written work does not help them to know what they need to do to improve.
- In the majority of cases, teachers do not set targets for learners that clearly identify what they need to do to improve and make progress. Learners' targets are too broad and vague, with no information on how they are to be achieved.
- Teachers track and monitor learners' progress well, identifying learners at risk of leaving the programme. However, the actions introduced to support learners are not recorded consistently, and as a result, it is difficult to identify the impact of actions on learners' progress.
- On ESOL courses, teachers use a wide range of different activities to engage and motivate learners. Learners participate actively in a range of interesting activities that develop their English skills to a high standard. They enjoy their lessons, and consequently most ESOL learners achieve their qualifications.
- The majority of teachers set clear objectives, which are focused on skill development and are shared with learners at the start of the lesson so they are clear about what they are

expected to achieve.

- Adult learners on vocational programmes develop their practical skills well, and improve their confidence and employment prospects. Learners on access to higher education courses receive good information, advice and guidance on progression to higher education and are supported well in their university applications.
- Adults with additional support needs are identified well at the beginning of their programme, with detailed information provided for teachers and support workers on how best to support learners to meet their individual needs.
- The majority of adult learners have a positive attitude to learning, are punctual to lessons, behave well and are respectful of their teachers and peers.
- Learners feel safe at the college and know who to report any concerns to. The majority of adult learners do not have a good enough understanding of the dangers of extremism and they are unable to explain how they would identify signs of potential radicalisation.
- Leaders and managers have developed learning programmes that meet the needs of the local community, learners and employers.

Apprenticeships

Requires improvement

- The college has 776 apprentices currently on programme, of whom 315 are advanced apprentices, and 23 are higher apprentices. Some 154 apprentices are being trained and assessed by subcontractors. The vast majority of apprentices are on health and social care, business administration, construction trades, and hair and beauty programmes, with smaller numbers following programmes in engineering, information technology, sport, media and education and training.
- In 2015/16, overall achievement rates for apprenticeships increased but not enough apprentices successfully completed their programme in the planned time. Leaders and managers have introduced actions to improve the number of apprentices who complete their qualification in the planned time. The number of current apprentices on target to complete on time is improving but it remains too low.
- Teachers and assessors, during off-the-job training sessions, provide insufficient challenge to apprentices and too many apprentices make slow progress. Teachers use ineffective questioning techniques that do not challenge all apprentices to demonstrate their understanding and, as a result, many apprentices lose focus and become disengaged from learning.
- Apprentices develop spoken English, IT and mathematical skills to meet the minimum levels expected for their qualification, but they develop their written skills too slowly. Additional help is available for apprentices who need it, but English skills are not practised or reinforced in the workplace or through assignment work. The quality of apprentices' written work is often weak; they do not get enough support to improve their spelling, punctuation and grammar and so they continue to make the same mistakes. Attendance at English and mathematics functional skills classes is low.
- In the majority of training sessions apprentices' practical use of mathematics is well developed. Joinery apprentices calculate angles and ratios in relation to roof structures and electrical apprentices calculate current and resistance in electrical installations.

- Apprentices' targets, set by teachers or assessors at progress reviews, are not sufficiently clear and do not ensure that apprentices understand what they need to do to progress. The majority of targets set for apprentices relate only to completion of assessment tasks and do not challenge apprentices to develop skills and knowledge more quickly. Consequently, too many apprentices take too long to achieve their qualification.
- Apprentices are supported and guided well by assessors who use their extensive industrial experience to work closely with employers and ensure that programmes match apprentices' workplace needs and aspirations. The vast majority of those who achieve their qualifications progress to sustained employment.
- Apprentices develop good vocational skills to an industry standard. Teachers and assessors use good industrial and commercial knowledge to check, develop and extend apprentices' practical skills, knowledge and understanding. Employers value these skills and the enhanced roles that apprentices provide in the workplace. Most apprentices can relate their learning well to on-the-job activities and use technical language appropriately.
- Practical resources and workshops support learning well. For example, hair and beauty salons replicate the environment found in local businesses and apprentices effectively enhance their personal skills in dealing with customers and colleagues as they would in the workplace. Employers' resources are of a very high standard and specialist mentors support apprentices' vocational development effectively.
- In the majority of off-the-job practical training sessions, teachers and assessors take account of apprentices' prior skills to plan and teach lessons to motivate most apprentices to make good progress in developing their practical skills.
- Apprentices demonstrate a good awareness of how to keep themselves and others safe, understanding and using safe work practices. Apprentices have a good awareness of British values, which are reinforced well by assessors and teachers. Too few apprentices have a good understanding of the dangers of radicalisation and extremism.

Provision for learners with high needs

Requires improvement

- The college has 99 learners aged 16 to 24 in receipt of high-needs funding to provide extra support for their learning difficulties and/or disabilities and/or medical conditions. Forty-eight of these learners are supported on mainstream programmes across the college. Fifty-one learners (including seven learners on the supported internship programme) are in provision specially designed for learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and/or medical conditions.
- Although there is a good emphasis on project work for learners with high needs, current resources limit the type of practical work that can be carried out by learners. For example, they do not have access to extensive domestic, kitchen or laundry resources, retail simulations and relevant computer-based learning programmes.
- Teachers place insufficient importance on the need to set clear and specific targets to guide learning and against which to measure learners' progress. Teachers often set targets that are too general, and do not reflect the learning that is planned. Learners' long-term goals and education, health and care plans are not sufficiently broken down into small, achievable steps to help them make good progress. Many targets do not focus sufficiently on learners' personal development.

- The range of work experience placements for learners with high needs is increasing and good opportunities for internal college work experience are available. Too few learners participate in high-quality and individually tailored work shadowing and work experience. Consequently, learners are not benefiting from experiences that will provide them with routes into voluntary work and paid employment. Too many learners are unable to use work experience opportunities to develop their confidence, self-assurance and independence.
- College support staff efficiently manage learners' transition from school to college. As a result, learners adapt quickly to the college environment and most enjoy their learning. Behaviour in lessons is very good and attendance is high.
- Learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities of varying severity participate successfully on mainstream learning programmes. Leaders and managers have developed a very inclusive culture within the college and are committed to demonstrating that every learner matters.
- Leaders and managers collect comprehensive information about learners with high needs and produce extremely detailed profiles. Teachers and learning support officers are very well informed about learners' learning difficulties and/or disabilities and medical conditions, and the potential impact of these on their learning. Teachers find the learner profiles invaluable when they are preparing lessons and working with learners in lessons.
- Most learning support officers are skilled at working with learners, either individually or in small groups, to promote learning and aid learners' progress. Learning support officers work collaboratively with tutors on mainstream programmes to ensure that learners are fully integrated into classes.
- Learners progressively acquire a relevant range of skills relating to independent living, English and mathematics, and job prospects through two well-designed discrete programmes: preparing for adulthood and preparing for work. Many learners progress to study English, mathematics, employability and life skills at increasingly higher levels. Through very good partnership working with external organisations, including the local council, seven learners with high needs are following a supported internship programme and they are making good progress.
- Leaders and managers work very effectively with external providers of specialist support, including occupational therapists, adult social care teams and sexual health educators. Learners' welfare and well-being are prioritised and when necessary they are referred to external agencies for specialist information, advice and guidance.
- Managers and tutors place a high priority on safeguarding learners and ensuring their safety. Procedures for dealing with safeguarding issues among learners with high needs are very effective. For example, an imminent forced marriage, against the learner's wishes, was successfully stopped. For another learner, female genital mutilation was also averted through prompt action by the safeguarding team. Learners feel safe and know what action to take if there is any likelihood of their safety being jeopardised.

Provider details

Unique reference number	130505
Type of provider	General further education college
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	6,554
Principal/CEO	Mr Alun Francis
Telephone number	0161 785 4000
Website	www.oldham.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 or above	
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+
Total number of learners (excluding apprenticeships)	894	606	617	358	779	125		
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	272	351	111	305	3	38		
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	n/a		n/a					
Number of learners aged 14 to 16	n/a							
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	99							
Funding received from:	Education Funding Agency and Skills Funding Agency							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	DKFS Training Ltd The Training Brokers Ltd Kashmir Youth Project SHL Training Solutions Ltd DMR Training and Consultancy Ltd							

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the vice principal, quality and curriculum, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the college'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 college.

Inspection team

Stephen Miller, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Andrea Machell	Her Majesty's Inspector
Joanna Stokes	Ofsted Inspector
Mike Ashurst	Ofsted Inspector
Ken Fisher	Ofsted Inspector
Elaine Price	Ofsted Inspector
Ralph Brompton	Ofsted Inspector
Ken Merry	Her Majesty's Inspector
Helen Flint	Her Majesty's Inspector

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Learner View

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Employer View

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