

Wakefield College

General further education college

Inspection dates

27–30 March 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	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection			Good

Summary of key findings

This is a provider that requires improvement

- Students' achievements are too low. Too few students achieve the grades and develop the higher level skills of which they are capable.
- Governors, leaders and staff have not secured sufficiently good improvement in students' progress and achievements.
- Governors and senior leaders do not use management information well enough to evaluate the impact of managers' actions during the year. They do not have a clear view of the quality of provision and the progress that students make.
- Students' attendance is too low.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is not of a consistently high standard. Teachers do not use students' and apprentices' starting points sufficiently to provide challenging work. As a result, too many students do not achieve their full potential.
- Too few students aged 16 to 19 on vocational programmes benefit from substantial work experience to gain relevant work skills.
- Students do not make sufficient progress in developing their English and mathematical skills; too few achieve grades A*–C in GCSE qualifications.

The provider has the following strengths

- Leaders and staff promote an inclusive culture that embraces the values of the college. Students are respectful and standards of behaviour are high.
- Most students who have high needs develop their independence, make good progress and achieve their targets.
- Leaders and managers have developed a large number of effective partnerships. A well-designed range of courses is helping to develop the skills required to meet local skills needs.
- Staff support students effectively to develop their personal and social skills. Students benefit from a range of enrichment activities and personal support, which helps them to overcome many of the difficulties they face, and equips them with skills that improve their employability.
- Students develop relevant knowledge and good practical skills that enable them to progress successfully to further study or employment.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Wakefield College is a large, general further education college situated in the centre of Wakefield and serving the Wakefield Metropolitan District. The college offers further education courses in 15 sector-subject areas, and delivers apprenticeships and employer training. The college has subcontracted provision with one provider.
- Wakefield College aims to promote inclusive social cohesion in an area of deprivation through providing education and training opportunities for all students. The college works with a range of local partnerships to contribute to the wider prosperity and regeneration of West Yorkshire. Many students are from the most economically deprived local areas, around a fifth are of minority ethnic heritage, and more than half of students enrol at the college without having achieved five GCSEs at grade A*–C, including English and mathematics. West Yorkshire is a 'Prevent' duty priority area, and the proportion of residents in Wakefield with no qualifications is 10% higher than national rates.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Improve the quality of teaching, learning and assessment by ensuring that all teachers:
 - plan and use activities that take account of students' starting points and prior learning and challenge students so that they achieve their potential
 - closely monitor the progress of students in lessons and during their programme to ensure that they provide effective support to those at risk of falling behind
 - set high expectations of what students can achieve and support students to make good or better progress
 - ensure that students who have high needs make at least good progress in vocational lessons.
- Rapidly improve students' attendance on study programmes and adult learning programmes.
- Ensure that a greater proportion of students successfully achieve their qualification.
- Improve the development of students' English and mathematical skills so that a greater proportion achieve their functional skills and GCSE qualifications or improve their GCSE grade.
- Rapidly improve the proportion of students, particularly on vocational study programmes, who develop relevant work skills as a result of high-quality work experience.
- Ensure that teachers capture students' prior employment skills and knowledge at the start of their programme and use this information to monitor and help students understand their progress in developing the skills and knowledge that they need for work or to achieve their personal goals.

- Ensure that leaders and managers improve the rigour of self-assessment so that it is accurate, and gives more importance to monitoring and evaluating students' progress and the impact of leaders' and managers' actions on outcomes for learners. Ensure that leaders and managers closely monitor and evaluate progress from the recently implemented improvement strategies, and take any further necessary actions quickly.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Requires improvement

- Since the previous inspection, governors, leaders and staff have been slow to secure sufficient improvement in students' progress and achievement. There has been a steady decline in the proportion of students who achieve their qualifications, particularly at level 3. Too many students do not progress as well as they could from their starting points, and too many students do not develop their skills in English and mathematics well enough.
- Leaders and managers have not secured consistently high-quality teaching, learning and assessment. Teachers improve their teaching and assessment practice as a result of coaching from the recently introduced high-performance team and through high-quality generic training. However, this does not enable them to improve specific weaknesses in their teaching such as meeting the individual needs of students in lessons and challenging students to achieve their full potential.
- The quality improvement process is not effective enough. Governors and senior leaders have been over-generous in their evaluation of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, and the effectiveness of leadership and management. Leaders and managers do not have a clear view of the areas for improvement and actions required to improve the quality of provision because they have given insufficient attention to how the quality of course delivery and low attendance are impacting on students' progress.
- Senior leaders do not use self-assessment well enough to set precise, short-term improvement targets at college level. Too often, leaders and managers do not intervene quickly enough to improve weaker aspects of the provision. Governors have insufficient information to challenge leaders and managers about the pace of improvement. Leaders and governors do not have a precise understanding of how well students are performing against their achievement targets. Curriculum managers use data effectively to monitor the attendance and progress of students within their area of responsibility and to identify and provide extra support where needed for individual students. Consequently, the proportion of students who stay on their courses is high.
- Leaders and managers have been too slow in developing relevant work-experience opportunities for students. Too few students aged 16 to 19, particularly on vocational study programmes, have completed substantial work experience. The small proportion of students that participate in work experience develop their skills well, often in a commercial environment.
- Leaders' and managers' actions to increase the priority of English and mathematics and address performance concerns are not consistently effective in improving students' progress in developing their skills. Managers have implemented a range of initiatives for improving the quality of English and mathematics provision, particularly on GCSE and functional skills courses, and across all vocational areas. For example, they have prioritised timetabling for English and mathematics lessons and provided additional lessons for students who are not performing at their expected level in practice tests, and resources to support teachers' delivery. However, the impact of these actions has been limited. A large proportion of students are not developing their English and mathematical skills well enough and too few achieve grades A*–C in their GCSE qualification.

- Senior leaders and managers have developed a curriculum that meets the needs of an increasing number of level 1 and level 2 students, covers all levels and ages, and includes academic, vocational and technical courses. The new structure enables students who achieve their qualification to progress successfully between levels. However, too many teachers have been slow in adapting their planning and teaching methods to meet the particular challenges of the new curriculum and, as a result, in several areas students' achievement is too low.
- Senior leaders and managers have taken recent actions to improve the quality of students' experience across the provision. The quality of pre-enrolment advice and guidance has improved, which has resulted in a marked decrease in the number of current students withdrawing from their course. Senior leaders have strengthened the process for reviewing the performance of managers and staff, and now use business reviews and observations of teaching, learning and assessment to identify weak practice, support teachers to improve, and manage changes in staffing more effectively. There is evidence of improved retention of students, and of improved achievement for students on a number of programmes. However, actions are not yet translating into consistently good teaching, learning and assessment.
- Senior leaders have effective links with the local enterprise partnership, the local authority, schools and employers. These partnerships ensure that the curriculum reflects the current skill requirements of the local and regional job market and prepare students for local employment. The large majority of students move on to their next steps or into employment within the region. Links with schools improve transition, particularly for students who have not thrived at school; this is having a positive impact on retention. Links with the local authority and Jobcentre Plus mean that provision is well coordinated and develops employment opportunities, particularly for adult students in the development of English and mathematics and the skills required to return to employment.
- Staff demonstrate a supportive, respectful and caring attitude towards students. Senior leaders and managers have developed and enhanced support teams to respond to the needs of vulnerable students and the needs of students who have not achieved well at school and are uncertain of their next steps. Clear expectations in relation to attendance, behaviour and discipline improve many vulnerable students' ability to stay on their course, and to achieve and progress. Leaders, managers and teachers develop students' knowledge and positive attitudes towards equality and diversity, and these values are evident in students' day-to-day attitudes and behaviours. Most students understand and demonstrate appropriate attitudes for life in modern Britain.

The governance of the provider

- Governors and senior leaders have high aspirations for students and have developed the estate for the benefit of students while prudently managing the college's finances. Consequently, students benefit from high-quality learning environments that enhance learning; additional learning areas support independent learning, and academic and personal needs well.

- Governors and senior leaders have a clear strategy for the college and communicate the important role that it plays in the community. Governors, senior leaders and staff are very committed to achieving the college's aim of providing education and training opportunities for all students and to be inclusive. Senior leaders play an effective leadership role in developing the skills strategy, and in its delivery within the region.
- Governors do not challenge senior leaders sufficiently to improve outcomes for students rapidly and ensure that they achieve their full potential. The governing body has an appropriate range of skills and experience and holds the senior management team to account on a range of indicators such as staffing, resources and social and regional developments. However, governors do not receive sufficient detail about the progress that students make within the year or the strengths and weaknesses of teaching and learning and assessment to enable them to challenge leaders robustly to improve quality and outcomes for students.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Leaders and managers take all aspects of their safeguarding responsibilities seriously. Appropriate policies and procedures are in place and staff use them well to protect students who are at risk of harm. The single central record of recruitment checks on staff is in place and is accurate, and managers follow safe recruitment policy and best practice.
- The safeguarding team, under the leadership of the designated safeguarding officer, ensures that students understand the meaning and importance of safeguarding. Students know whom they should report to if they have concerns about their safety. The safeguarding officer responds appropriately to their concerns and records and monitors incidents appropriately. The designated safeguarding officer has excellent links with local professionals.
- Staff and students have appropriate training and updates, including on the 'Prevent' duty. Students feel safe and undertake safe working practices. The large majority of students are able to explain and demonstrate an in-depth knowledge of how to protect themselves from the dangers of radicalisation and extremism, and can relate the risks to their local context.
- Managers ensure that appropriate transitional arrangements are in place for children looked after and students who have high needs that ensure that students quickly settle into college life.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Requires improvement

- When planning for learning, teachers do not take sufficient account of students' initial starting points. Teachers assess the starting points of their students at the beginning of the programme, but too many do not use this information well enough to plan learning. In too many instances, teachers do not set ambitious targets to ensure that students achieve what they are capable of; nor do they monitor effectively whether students achieve their targets or not. As a result, students do not make rapid enough progress.

- Too often, teachers set work that is insufficiently stimulating or challenging for students. They set work for the most able students that is too easy, and students spend too much time on the same task when they could move on. Students often complete their work quickly and then have to wait for others to catch up. In a small number of instances, this results in low-level disruption. A small proportion of students with lower starting points than their peers often find that the topic is too complex and, as result, they struggle to keep up in lessons.
- Too many teachers do not use assessment strategies effectively, particularly questioning techniques, to ensure that students understand new concepts and develop higher order skills, or to assess accurately students' progress in the lesson. In too many lessons, teachers do not use questions well enough to encourage full participation of everyone in the group. This results in a small minority of students dominating classroom discussions, with too many students not participating or demonstrating their understanding of the topic. Too often, teachers do not assess or review students' progress before moving on to new topics. Consequently, a large proportion of students do not learn from tasks as well as they could, particularly on level 3 programmes.
- The feedback that teacher give students about their work is often insufficiently clear or helpful, which means that students are often not sure what they need to do to improve or to achieve at a higher level. Feedback following assessment does not develop many students' understanding of how they can improve their work to achieve more than the minimum requirements. This is particularly the case for advanced-level students and on English and mathematics GCSE and functional skills courses.
- In too many lessons, teachers do not develop students' English and mathematical skills well enough, particularly on study programmes and apprenticeships. Too many teachers do not make the topic relevant to the students' vocational programme, and a high proportion of students are not making secure progress in developing these essential skills. In a minority of subjects, teachers develop these skills well; for example, students on entry-level employability courses improve their written skills by producing a calendar, and plastering students calculate the wastage incurred when tiling a wall.
- Students develop their practical and communication skills well through clear feedback and effective coaching and demonstration by their well-qualified teachers. Teachers plan and use effective learning activities in practical sessions that enable the large majority of students to gain a good understanding of the correct technical terminology and the practical skills used in their industry. For example, catering students understand the term 'pane' when coating food in breadcrumbs and are able to truss a chicken and prepare it for cooking.
- Students and apprentices make good progress in developing their confidence and self-esteem during their course, which enables them to be effective in their lives and at work. Teachers of English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) focus well on developing the language skills of students so that they can participate in everyday reading and writing tasks. Apprentices develop good communication skills with their colleagues and their customers while at work. For example, business apprentices contribute effectively to the smooth running of their school and frequently use their initiative and customer-service skills when working on reception.

- Teachers use a good range of resources and learning materials, including the virtual learning environment (VLE) to engage and enthuse students. The use of the VLE enables students to catch up if they miss lessons or continue their learning outside lessons. The college provides workshops, studios, salons and kitchens where students have access to industry-standard equipment and where they develop their practical skills well. Students have access to a good range of computers to produce their assignment work. Libraries supply a good range of resources, which helps students to research topics for their assignments.
- Pastoral and additional learning support for students is good, and a high proportion of students that need extra support complete their course successfully. Teachers assess students' individual support needs at the start of their programme and ensure that students receive effective specialist support quickly. There is effective in-class support and drop-in workshops in the 'achievement resource centre' as well as individual sessions. Specialist staff provide English, mathematics, dyslexia and behavioural support to students. The resources that managers provide to support students who have high needs are excellent.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Requires improvement

- The attendance of the majority of students is too low. This limits the progress of too many students.
- On too many programmes, students and apprentices do not develop their skills in English and mathematics well enough. Too few teachers challenge students to extend their skills further.
- Too few students on vocational study programmes have the opportunity to gain relevant work skills through substantial work experience. Managers have plans in place for all students on study programmes to participate in external work-experience opportunities; however, only a small proportion of students have completed placements so far. Students that carry out work placements receive positive feedback from employers that helps them to develop their skills and confidence further.
- Students' standards of behaviour are high. Students show respect for the ideas and views of others. They demonstrate mutual respect and rapport for peers and staff within their learning programmes and demonstrate the college's values.
- Most students who have high needs, and particularly those on specialist courses, make good progress towards achieving their qualification aims, improving their personal and social skills, and developing greater independent living skills.
- Most students develop effective technical and practical skills and knowledge that will help them to secure their chosen career or job. Many students work independently and take pride in their work and their achievements. For example, students in performing arts demonstrate their creative skills by performing at an annual end-of-year show, and students in engineering develop high standards of practical motorcycle maintenance skills. A very small proportion of students do not demonstrate in lessons the conduct expected by employers. Teachers do not address this behaviour consistently and, consequently, do not prepare students adequately for the world of work.

- Students and apprentices who frequently attend make good progress in developing the personal and social skills that they need to secure work or move on to the next level. For example, they improve their problem-solving and communication skills through a wide range of enrichment and work-related activities. Managers have been effective in working with employers and local services to increase the number of work-related activities that students carry out and, as a result, students develop a good understanding of the expectations of employers and universities.
- Staff provide effective, impartial careers advice at the start of and during programmes, which helps students to choose the right course and consider their next steps. Students speak positively about the range of pre-enrolment and taster activities that staff provide. This helps students to make an informed choice that meets their career aims. Specialist careers advice is effective and supports students to apply successfully for and secure university places, higher apprenticeships and roles in specific employment sectors.
- Students are aware of their rights and responsibilities, and participate in a range of college activities to share their views and opinions. These include student union activities and student pride events. Many students also carry out the role of class representatives on the student council and student ambassadors during college events. Students demonstrate a depth of understanding of life in modern Britain, and the problems faced by individuals and groups in society.
- Students feel safe, work safely and are safe. They know how to report any concerns that they have about their safety. Students have a good awareness of the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism as a result of the wide range of training that they have received. Students talk confidently about these risks in the context of their workplace and at home. They understand how to stay safe when using the internet, and they can recognise 'fake news' stories and the radicalised views of a range of groups.

Outcomes for learners

Requires improvement

- Senior leaders and managers have implemented a wide range of improvement initiatives in the last two years. However, these have not brought about sufficient improvement in students' achievements or in their progress. Too many students do not make the progress expected of them based on their attainment when they start their course. Students' achievement is not consistently good across a range of levels and subject areas.
- The proportion of 16- to 19-year-old and adult students who achieve their qualifications has declined in many subject areas and at all levels, and is too low.
- Most students on 16 to 19 study programmes do not make sufficient progress in developing their English and mathematical skills and too few improve their GCSE grade from that achieved at school. More than half of adult students do not achieve grades A*–C in GCSE English and mathematics. Achievement rates for students taking English and mathematics functional skills are improving, but are still too low for adult students.
- Students on vocational and academic programmes do not make the progress expected of them based on their prior attainment. Too few students and apprentices achieve high grades or develop sufficiently advanced skills in several subjects, including construction, engineering, health and social care, and on A- and AS-level courses.

- The proportion of apprentices who achieve their qualification within their planned timescale has improved over the past three years, and is above the rate for similar providers. However, the achievement rate remains low for apprentices aged 16 to 18.
- Outcomes for students who have high needs are good. Students who have high needs achieve their targets, and most move on successfully to independent living, supported employment or volunteering.
- The large majority of students who left the college in 2015/16 progressed to a higher level of learning or employment. Progression between levels of education is good, with an increasing number of students securing places at prestigious universities or higher level apprenticeships as a result of completing the senior leadership mentoring programme and the young enterprise initiative.
- A high proportion of students who started their course in September 2016 are still on their programmes at the college.
- Managers have successfully closed most of the achievement gaps identified in 2015/16, including the lower achievement of students from local economically deprived areas. However, their actions have not yet closed the performance gap between female and male apprentices.

Types of provision

16 to 19 study programmes

Requires improvement

- Currently, there are 3,156 students enrolled on study programmes in 14 vocational areas, the largest being health, engineering, science and mathematics. Approximately half of students are studying at level 3. The college meets the principles of the study programme.
- The proportion of students aged 16 to 19 who achieve their qualifications is too low and too few make the progress of which they are capable. Too many teachers do not use their knowledge of students' starting points to plan stimulating lessons and activities that motivate and challenge students. Teachers' expectations of students are too low in a high proportion of lessons and, as a result, too many students do not make good enough progress and achieve the high grades of which they are capable.
- Too few teachers plan learning activities that reinforce the development of written English and mathematical skills in vocational lessons. In construction lessons, teachers do not always rectify spelling errors in learning materials or in students' work. Consequently, too many students continue to make mistakes and do not make sufficient progress in developing their skills further.
- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment on study programmes varies significantly between subjects and levels and is not consistently good. Too few teachers check learning thoroughly or confirm students' knowledge and understanding through the use of directed and probing questions. A large proportion of teachers do not challenge the most able students in lessons to explore ideas in depth or to develop higher technical skills in line with their potential. A smaller proportion of the less able students find tasks too difficult and do not have a sound understanding before moving on to the next topic; as a result, they do not make good enough progress in lessons.

- Too many teachers are not fully aware of the progress that individual students make in developing their academic and personal skills. Teachers' recording of students' progress requires improvement, as the majority of academic targets set do not offer specific guidance to students on how they can improve the standards of their work or achieve higher grades. Often, teachers do not set additional work in lessons for students to develop their knowledge further.
- Most teachers use their knowledge well to link theory to practice, which helps students to understand the practice expected in many jobs. For example, in childcare lessons, students study Bandura's experiment and understand the importance of early years practitioners demonstrating a positive role model to young children.
- Most students develop a good understanding of technical language, which improves their confidence and prepares them well for their next level in learning or for future employment. For example, in level 1 animal care lessons, students use the correct scientific names for animals when producing display information and health and care guides.
- Students benefit from teachers' current industry expertise and learning resources of a high standard, which help them to develop the skills that they need to secure employment. For example, students in applied science lessons make yoghurt and apply their knowledge to small-scale yoghurt production in industry.
- Most students work together well, and respect each other and their teachers in an inclusive learning environment.

Adult learning programmes

Requires improvement

- Currently, there are 1,758 students enrolled on adult learning programmes across 15 vocational areas. The largest areas are health and retail services, with a large proportion of students studying on programmes in preparation for employment. There are similar numbers of students on levels 1, 2 and 3.
- The proportion of adult students who achieve their qualifications or make the progress of which they are capable is too low. Too many teachers do not take into account the wide variation in students' starting points and, as a result, do not plan and deliver learning and assessment that challenges the most able students or supports the students who are less experienced to achieve their potential. The quality of teaching, learning and assessment varies considerably across the adult provision, and too little is good or better.
- Teachers' planning to meet the different needs of individual students is underdeveloped in most lessons. Teachers have access to detailed individual student profiles. However, too often they do not use these well enough to plan and deliver lessons that meet students' individual needs successfully. A large proportion of students complete the same activities at the same pace and, as a result, the most able students often finish work early and do not receive more demanding work to complete. The less able students sometimes struggle to understand and are unable to complete tasks successfully. Teachers often rush through work too quickly, and do not leave enough opportunities to summarise key points, or time for individual students to reflect on what has taken place in the lesson.

- Too few teachers set high enough expectations for students, and a large proportion are willing to give solutions to questions they pose rather than encouraging students to solve problems themselves. Too many teachers do not check individual learning effectively. Many of their questions do not probe and develop deeper understanding sufficiently. In many lessons, a small minority of students answer the majority of questions. Teachers are often unaware of the progress that some individuals have made in the lesson, particularly in group-work activities. They do not encourage students enough to extend their knowledge further.
- Too few teachers use assessment well enough to provide clear feedback that ensures that students fully understand what they need to do to improve their knowledge or develop their skills. Many teachers set targets, but these often lack sufficient focus on the development of the specific skills and knowledge that students require for employment. Students often make slow progress in developing their written skills.
- In most lessons, teachers use activities well to develop students' communication skills. Students are encouraged to speak clearly about their work, often through small group presentations. Students become confident in using specialist English vocabulary accurately and precisely. This helps them to communicate more confidently and authoritatively in their professional area.
- The large majority of students develop effective problem-solving skills that help them prepare for the world of work or higher education. Teachers are knowledgeable and experienced in their areas of academic and professional expertise and use this well to help students gain a better understanding of current requirements within jobs or university entrance requirements. For example, students on employment programmes develop improved problem-solving and communication skills through an activity designed to test disaster recovery plans for a significant incident in the construction industry.
- Adult students benefit from high-quality resources that the college provides to support their learning and the development of practical industry skills. Salons, workshops and studios are well equipped with good facilities that motivate students to succeed. Classrooms are equipped to make students feel welcome and at ease. Most teachers encourage students to use the college's online facilities for research and presentations, and to track the progress of their work. This approach supports students to extend their learning beyond the lesson, particularly if they miss lessons.
- Most students develop good personal and social skills. Teachers effectively support students to develop the skills to work successfully with their peers in lessons and with colleagues at work. Students develop confidence and self-esteem and grow in social maturity and well-being.
- Students are well behaved and display positive behaviour and attitudes to learning. They are conscientious and eager to learn. Students value and appreciate what they are learning, particularly students returning to learning after many years away from formal education. Students recognise how important peer support and learning are to their enjoyment and success, and treat each other with consideration and respect. Teachers have developed successfully a culture of respect and tolerance.

- Adult learning programmes match local needs well. The curriculum prepares students well for their intended job roles or future careers in higher education. Many students overcome barriers to enable them to make progress into employment. For example, students referred from Jobcentre Plus attend workshops that develop skills required to gain employment, such as producing an appropriate curriculum vitae, speaking more confidently and developing effective teamwork.

Apprenticeships

Requires improvement

- The college has 701 apprentices following programmes in a wide range of sectors, including engineering and manufacturing, business and administration, health and social care, building and construction, retail and service industries, and information and communication technology. The majority of apprentices are studying at advanced level and approximately half are aged 16 to 18. The college meets the apprenticeship requirements.
- Although the proportion of apprentices who achieve their qualification within their planned timescale has improved over the past three years, and remains above the rates of similar providers, achievement is still too low for apprentices aged 16 to 18.
- Too often, teachers do not take sufficient account of the prior knowledge and experience of apprentices when planning lessons. As a result, many apprentices make progress but a large proportion do not achieve at the level of which they are capable.
- Teachers do not use learning activities well enough to extend learning beyond the minimum required to pass the qualification. In too many lessons and reviews, staff do not challenge apprentices to think beyond the basic requirements of their assessments.
- In too many lessons, teachers do not check the progress that apprentices are making and often set students the same activities to work on throughout the lesson. Too often, apprentices repeat tasks that they have already carried out in previous lessons or in the workplace.
- Too many teachers do not set targets for apprentices to achieve beyond the minimum level required. Targets are set to achieve the qualification, but most short-term targets focus only on minimum expectations and do not provide sufficient challenge or detail about what apprentices need to do to achieve the highest standards of which they are capable.
- Information, advice and guidance do not take sufficient account of apprentices' starting points and prior work experience, and apprentices with varying skills and experiences all start their programme of study at the same point. A large proportion of apprentices do not enrol onto the right length and level of programme and, as a result, do not fully develop the skills of which they are capable and find the work too easy.
- The large majority of apprentices develop good practical skills which they apply and develop in the workplace. Employers appreciate the contribution that these skills make to their business in practical and monetary terms. For example, electrical engineering apprentices support their employer by completing preparation work to strip out wires, which allows the employer to undertake more complex installations.

- Teachers use learning technology effectively during off-the-job training, which supports apprentices' learning and builds their employability skills both in the classroom and in the workplace. Teachers use presentations skilfully during off-the-job training to illustrate concepts and to check apprentices' understanding. For example, in construction lessons, apprentices benefit from the opportunity to identify the safety features from a broad range of images of woodwork machinery that they would not always use in their place of work.
- Apprentices feel safe and work safely. They have a good understanding of health and safety, and adopt safe working practices for their specialist industry.
- Managers and staff work well with employers to design and plan apprentices' programmes in line with national, regional and local priorities. On-the-job training, provided by supportive employers, is effective in developing and extending apprentices' skills. A large proportion of apprentices contribute well to their employers' businesses. For example, on engineering programmes, apprentices develop skills to meet both employer and industry standards and quickly take on extra roles in industrial processes. On dental nursing programmes, apprentices are equipped to undertake fully the role of dental nurse in demanding local practices with little supervision.

Provision for learners with high needs

Good

- The college currently has 154 students receiving additional high-needs funding. Students follow a range of work-related, personal development and vocational courses. The great majority of students are on specialist courses, with the remainder following vocational courses alongside other students.
- Managers use funding for students who have high needs well to provide a positive learning environment. External agencies, healthcare professionals, parents and carers contribute to the design of personalised programmes that build on students' prior attainment and enable them to progress to further study and employment.
- Attendance, punctuality and retention of students who have high needs are excellent and, as a result, students make good progress, learn new skills and understand the importance of resilience in the workplace.
- Support for students who have high needs is good. Managers and staff very carefully coordinate support to ensure that it remains valuable and leads to improvement; the student is central to this process and staff swiftly change support arrangements accordingly. Students on specialist learning programmes receive highly effective support to ensure that they successfully complete their programme, enjoy their experiences and are prepared very well for their next steps. Students on supported internships benefit from employers' involvement in planning the course and help with developing the skills that they need to work independently.

- Assessment of students' starting points is accurate and effective. Transition arrangements are comprehensive, timely and proactive, ensuring that staff understand students' individual needs fully at the start of their college experience. This helps students to settle into their studies quickly. Staff work very closely with schools both in Year 10 and Year 11, and with parents and carers, to develop draft support plans. Staff are active in decision making and challenge where they consider that there are different options. This has been the case with several students who are deaf, who report that they are pleased with the changes that staff make to improve their support plans.
- Well-qualified and highly experienced staff share their skills both within the additional learning support team and the broader college, which ensures the welfare of students who have high needs very well. Managers support staff well, both through unaccredited and accredited training and this means that staff are confident and capable in their decision making about high-needs learning. Staff in turn share their experiences and train their colleagues on aspects such as note taking, deaf awareness and anger management. This raises awareness and supports teachers in vocational lessons to gain a better understanding of these needs more closely.
- Highly skilled teachers, particularly on specialist courses, ensure that learning is rapid, entertaining and current and, as a result, students are very enthusiastic and make good progress. For example, a lesson exploring environmental awareness included discussion about a very recent United States policy change and what that could mean for the world and Britain. Students are able to recount this with their evaluation, and express their own thoughts and opinions thoughtfully and respectfully.
- Students on specialist courses know clearly how well they are doing and what to do to improve. This ensures that they are very motivated and keen to learn. Teachers provide encouraging feedback in lessons immediately, mark students' work clearly, and set clear targets regularly so that students know their progress and what they need to do to improve. Students report that they are proud of their achievements.
- Managers and staff have successfully developed a broad range of enrichment activities and facilities that support students who have high needs to develop their independent living skills. The 'empowerment, enrichment and progression programme' includes a series of regular, planned opportunities for students to attend craft and cookery clubs, sessions on remaining safe online, 'eat and greet' initiatives, and disability sports initiatives and competitions. Students who have high needs benefit from a supportive social room where they regularly have 'time-out' opportunities if they need these, or work with experienced staff who help them to understand their behaviour.
- Students benefit very well from participating fully in the college's tutorial programme and in individual tuition that explores aspects such as sex education, sexuality, dating, the 'Prevent' duty and safeguarding. These sessions are delivered in a sensitive and effective manner.

- Too few students who have high needs and are studying on vocational programmes receive sufficient and consistent support from their teachers to ensure that they fulfil their potential. Too many students in vocational lessons do not make the progress of which they are capable. Students' work is not marked regularly and vocational teachers do not routinely correct spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors. Targets set by vocational teachers are not clear and, as a result, students do not know fully what to do to improve. In many vocational classes, teachers are unaware of which students have high needs or what the specific support needs are for individuals.

Provider details

Unique reference number	130549
Type of provider	Further education
Age range of learners	16+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	6,723
Principal	Sam Wright
Telephone number	01924 789789
Website	www.wakefield.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)	767	554	776	577	1,613	627	56	565
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	174	87	164	207	2	49		
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	0		0		0			
Number of learners aged 14 to 16	0							
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	154							
Funding received from	Education Funding Agency and Skills Funding Agency							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors	Barnardo's							

Information about this inspection

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

Tracey Mace-Akroyd, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Andrea Machell	Her Majesty's Inspector
Julie Gibson	Ofsted Inspector
Christopher Young	Ofsted Inspector
Lynne Paxton	Ofsted Inspector
Allan Shaw	Ofsted Inspector
Nicholas Sanders	Ofsted Inspector
Alison Cameron Brandwood	Her Majesty's Inspector
Martin Ward	Her Majesty's Inspector
Sheila Willis	Her Majesty's Inspector

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