

Hugh Baird College

General further education college

Inspection dates

26 February–1 March 2018

Overall effectiveness			Good
Effectiveness of leadership and management	Good	16 to 19 study programmes	Good
Quality of teaching, learning and assessment	Good	Adult learning programmes	Good
Personal development, behaviour and welfare	Good	Apprenticeships	Requires improvement
Outcomes for learners	Good	Provision for learners with high needs	Good
		Full-time provision for 14- to 16-year-olds	Good
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection			Good

Summary of key findings

This is a good provider

- Governors and senior leaders promote a highly inclusive ethos where learners are tolerant of each other. Learners embody the college values of 'respect for those around you, respect for yourself and respect for the college'.
- Senior leaders and managers ensure that close collaboration with local partners and employers results in a well-planned, coherent curriculum that meets the needs of local people and employers in Sefton and Liverpool, as well as the priorities of the wider Liverpool City region.
- Achievement rates for learners have risen over the last three years. Leaders and managers have improved outcomes for learners on courses including hairdressing, beauty therapy and business. Achievement is now high for learners aged 16 to 18, learners with high needs and adults.
- Learners enjoy an extensive range of enrichment activities and meaningful work experience. Many learners and apprentices achieve extra qualifications and certificates. These opportunities further develop their practical, personal, social and employability skills very effectively.
- Learners benefit from highly effective pastoral guidance and support, which means that they remain on their course.
- Learners develop good practical skills that prepare them effectively for work.
- Full-time learners on 14 to 16 programmes, who often have complex social, emotional and behavioural issues, make good progress in their vocational and GCSE lessons.
- In a minority of lessons, lecturers do not take into account learners' or apprentices' starting points to plan learning that challenges the most able to make the progress of which they are capable.
- Leaders' and managers' strategies to improve the quality of apprenticeships are not successful. Consequently, apprentices do not make the progress of which they are capable, particularly in electrotechnical apprenticeships and those who study at the subcontractor, Absolute Training Solutions.
- Attendance to lessons in several courses is too low.

Full report

Information about the provider

- Hugh Baird College is situated in Bootle in the south of the borough of Sefton in Merseyside. The college has three sites throughout Merseyside. The vast majority of learners attend the main college campus in Bootle. The college recently acquired South Sefton College and now offers a range of A-level courses at this site. A very small minority of learners with high needs attend Thornton College. The college provides education and training for around 4,000 learners and apprentices. It provides courses from entry level to level 4 in a range of subjects. The largest subject areas are construction, building services, hairdressing and beauty therapy, creative arts and media, and sport. Hugh Baird College subcontracts with Absolute Training Solutions to deliver fenestration apprenticeships.
- Approximately 274,300 people live in the local authority area of Sefton. Around one third of the working-age population have qualifications at level 4 or above. This is slightly below that of the North West region and 6% below the national average. The proportion of learners in the local authority area who achieve English and mathematics GCSEs at grades 9 to 4 is slightly below the regional average and slightly above the national figure. Levels of unemployment in the local authority area of Sefton are similar to regional and national averages and currently stand at 4.6%.

What does the provider need to do to improve further?

- Lecturers should use the information from learners' and apprentices' starting points to plan learning that challenges:
 - the most able learners to make the progress of which they are capable
 - apprentices to develop new skills and make rapid progress.
- Leaders and managers should bring about rapid improvements in the quality of the apprenticeship provision by:
 - improving the proportion of apprentices who achieve on health and social care, construction and electrotechnical apprenticeships
 - identifying and narrowing achievement gaps for apprentices, including those on advanced-level programmes, apprentices aged 16 to 23 and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities
 - increasing the proportion of apprentices studying with the subcontractor, Absolute Training Solutions, who achieve their apprenticeship within the planned time.
- Leaders and managers should improve learners' and apprentices' attendance on the courses where the rates are too low.

Inspection judgements

Effectiveness of leadership and management

Good

- The governors, principal and senior leaders are committed to an ambitious vision to provide a high standard of education and training. They develop learners' skills and knowledge well to enable them to progress into employment or further study.
- Governors and senior leaders promote a highly inclusive ethos. Learners are accepting of each other and behave responsibly. Learners and staff embody a culture that aligns successfully to British values. They demonstrate tolerance and respect for others. Learners from different cultures and backgrounds work harmoniously together.
- Senior leaders and managers have developed very effective partnerships with key stakeholders. They ensure that close collaboration with local partners and employers results in a well-planned curriculum. This meets the needs of the local community, employers and the priorities of the wider Liverpool City region very well. For example, managers have established an effective partnership with the National Health Service to train young people as healthcare professionals through the cadet scheme. Managers have successfully established a partnership with a large employer to develop new courses and apprenticeships that cultivate the skills required for the maritime industry and other employers in the supply chain. Leaders and managers have recently acquired a local sixth-form college to provide A-level courses to meet local needs.
- Senior leaders' and managers' strategies to improve the quality of courses and rectify the weaknesses from the previous inspection have been mostly successful. For example, the proportion of learners aged 16 to 18 and adults who achieved in 2016/17 has improved. Leaders and managers have improved achievement rates on courses such as business, hairdressing and beauty therapy. Achievement for learners on health and social care and travel and tourism is low, and apprenticeship achievement rates require improvement. The proportion of learners aged 16 to 19 who achieve grades A* to C or grades 9 to 4 in English and mathematics has risen slightly but remains low.
- Managers provide effective staff development that improves lecturers' practice where it is weak. Lecturers benefit from the wide range of staff development and individual coaching that they receive to improve specific aspects of their teaching. Leaders ensure that weak lecturers and managers who do not improve their practice leave the college. The quality of teaching, learning and assessment is good on the vast majority of courses. The quality of teaching, learning and assessment that apprentices receive requires improvement.
- Leaders and managers effectively manage the very small group of fenestration apprentices subcontracted to Absolute Training Solutions. The proportion of subcontracted apprentices who achieve their framework is higher than that of college apprentices. The proportion who achieve in the planned time is low. Leaders and managers have decided to end their subcontracting arrangements with this provider from March 2018.
- Leaders and managers ensure that learners benefit from good careers advice and guidance. Consequently, a high proportion of learners remain on their course and progress to further study or employment. Current learners are very clear about their future destinations and what they need to do to achieve their goal.

- The self-assessment report identifies accurately most of the areas requiring improvement. Some of the key judgements made by managers and governors do not sufficiently take into account learners' achievements. For example, governors and senior leaders judged apprenticeships to be good in 2016/17, although the proportion who achieved in the planned time was low.
- Leaders' and managers' use and analysis of data do not always provide them with an accurate understanding of performance in all departments in the college. For example, managers did not identify significant gaps in apprenticeship achievement by age and learning difficulty and/or disability.
- Leaders and managers have put in place strategies to improve the quality of apprenticeships, such as the appointment of new managers. Managers' actions have not yet improved the quality of apprentices' training, learning and assessment or the proportion that achieve in the planned time across all vocational areas. Most apprentices in beauty therapy, business administration, catering and hairdressing now achieve, but the achievement rates are low in health and social care, construction and electrotechnical apprenticeships.

The governance of the provider

- Governors have a good range of business and financial skills, experience and expertise to support senior leaders effectively. They are passionate about the college and are proud of their learners. They provide challenge to senior leaders when improvements are not made quickly enough, for example in the delivery of English and mathematics courses.
- Governors understand most aspects of the college well. Governors analyse the extensive data and performance information they receive from leaders. However, the complexity of the information they receive does not always enable governors to identify concerns quickly enough.

Safeguarding

- The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.
- Managers maintain an accurate and up-to-date single central record, including for their subcontractor. Designated safeguarding officers ensure that all staff have introductory and refresher training on safeguarding and the 'Prevent' duty.
- Extensive and effective partnerships exist with relevant external agencies and voluntary organisations. Staff respond quickly and appropriately to any safeguarding concerns raised by learners. Staff diligently keep detailed records. Vulnerable learners benefit from extensive support, including mentoring and counselling.
- 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.
- Designated safeguarding officers are well informed about potential risks to learners' safety. They make good use of local intelligence and provide learners with the information they need to identify how to keep themselves safe. Designated safeguarding officers are highly vigilant and report any of their concerns to the local 'Prevent' duty officer. Learners demonstrate a good awareness of the dangers of radicalisation but apprentices do not

have a sufficient understanding of the potential risks.

Quality of teaching, learning and assessment

Good

- In the majority of lessons, lecturers plan and execute learning well to motivate and challenge learners to reach their potential. They use developmental assessments effectively to set new targets for learners to achieve. Staff do not ensure that all apprentices develop new skills and knowledge swiftly enough.
- Lecturers have good levels of current industrial, technical and professional expertise. This enables learners to develop good skills and knowledge. For example, in hairdressing lessons, lecturers introduced new techniques such as lifting hair colour using heat and chemical products. Floristry lecturers demonstrated techniques of plaiting grasses to make a creative design.
- Lecturers develop high-quality learning materials that help learners to grasp key concepts in lessons. For example, in catering, the inclusion of a video clip case study of Paddington Bear created a 'marmalade moment' memory hook. As a result, learners recalled the emotion and pride they felt on receiving positive feedback from customers.
- Most lecturers plan and teach lessons well to ensure that learners and apprentices develop their numeracy skills successfully. For example, in carpentry and joinery, learners and apprentices took part in discussions about the importance of accurate measurements in minimising wastage. As a result, they produced industry-standard structural joints. A-level applied science learners used their mathematical knowledge successfully to draw balanced and reasoned conclusions during a research activity.
- Learners and apprentices develop their technical language successfully in practical lessons and workshops. For example, adult learners on floristry courses use botanical terms routinely. Full-time learners aged 14 to 16 on the painting and decorating course use terminology such as delamination and concertina in context. In a minority of vocational and apprenticeship lessons, tutors do not develop learners' and apprentices' written skills well enough to prepare them for employment.
- Observers are accurate in their judgements of the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. The college has enhanced the observation process in the current academic year. A coordinated programme of professional development and coaching sessions is leading to improvements in lecturers' practice.
- Learners are clear about the target grades lecturers set them at the beginning of the programme. Most learners are making good progress. A small minority of learners do not understand what they need to do to achieve their targets and, consequently, make slower progress.
- Targets set for a small minority of apprentices are too broad. Assessors and lecturers do not identify the steps the apprentice needs to take to achieve them. Consequently, these apprentices do not understand what they need to do to make better progress.
- A minority of lecturers and assessors do not provide sufficiently useful feedback to help learners aged 14 to 16 and 16 to 18 and apprentices to improve. This results in learners and apprentices making the same spelling, punctuation and grammatical mistakes over several consecutive pieces of written work.

- Lecturers in a minority of lessons do not take into account the prior experience or knowledge of learners and apprentices when planning and providing learning. As a result, the most able learners do not always achieve their potential because all learners complete the same activity.
- In a small minority of lessons, learning support workers are not always deployed by lecturers to support learners with high needs effectively. As a result, a few learners do not make the progress of which they are capable.

Personal development, behaviour and welfare

Good

- Learners' behaviour is very good in lessons and in communal areas around the college. Learners reflect very well the college values of 'respect for those around you, respect for yourself and respect for the college'.
- Learners improve their confidence and self-esteem. They develop their personal, social, communication, teamwork and organisational skills well. For example, learners in the sports department take part in the college 'super schools' initiative. This supports the delivery of physical activity in local primary schools. Learners plan and provide coaching and fitness sessions to primary schoolchildren based around national curriculum objectives.
- Learners produce work of a good standard. They are proud of the progress that they have made since they started their course. Learners are motivated by the opportunities that their course provides them. For example, adult learners in floristry, hospitality and catering, hairdressing and beauty therapy showcase their work to clients and customers in retail outlets at the college. Learners gain extra qualifications and certificates, such as stewarding, brand awareness, welding and cycling proficiency. These enhance their opportunities for employment, promotion and further study.
- Learners enjoy an extensive range of enrichment activities and meaningful work experience. This further increases the skills they develop on their programmes. For example, hospitality and catering learners, following a visit to a Michelin-starred restaurant in Denmark, produced a Nordic-themed dining menu. Motor vehicle learners and apprentices benefited from manufacturers' presentations about the different grades of lubricants in the modern combustion engine.
- Careers information, advice and guidance are effective. Careers staff are well trained. Learners benefit from the support they receive, such as coaching to complete application forms and developing their interview techniques. As a result, learners gain jobs with companies locally, nationally and internationally.
- Learners benefit from the pastoral guidance and support that they receive on key issues such as housing and childcare. College staff have developed particularly good links with staff at the local council. Council staff visit the college to provide useful information to learners on the services that are available to them, for example financial support.
- Learners and apprentices feel safe and know how to seek support. They demonstrate a good awareness of the importance of health and safety in their working environments, both at the college and in their workplace. Learners have an appropriate understanding of the risks of radicalisation and extremism and what action they must take if they have any concerns. They receive regular updates in their tutorial sessions, which include important

topics such as online safety and potential risks in their local community. Too many apprentices have a poor understanding of the risks associated with radicalisation and extremism.

- Learners enthuse about the information that they receive in tutorials on the importance of diversity in modern society. They are appreciative about the ease of access to information around the college, for example being able to view podcasts via QR codes on posters such as 'My Transgender Life'.
- Learners' and apprentices' attendance to lessons in several courses is too low.

Outcomes for learners

Good

- The proportion of learners on 16 to 19 study programmes who achieved their qualifications improved in 2016/17 and is high. Most current learners make good progress in their study programmes and develop their practical skills effectively.
- Achievement rates for adult learners have risen over the past three years and are now high. The vast majority of current learners make good progress.
- Full-time learners aged 14 to 16, who often join the college with a very low starting point and have often been disengaged from education for some time, make good progress from their starting points. The majority of learners aged 14 to 16 achieved their vocational qualifications and target grades in GCSE English and mathematics in 2016/17.
- Learners with high needs on specialist courses make good progress. They develop good skills and progress to become independent in everyday life. A minority of learners with high needs on vocational courses do not always make the progress of which they are capable.
- Leaders and managers effectively identified gaps in achievement for different groups of learners. Gaps between male and female learners on 16 to 18 study programmes and on adult programmes have reduced for current learners. Leaders and managers do not identify the gaps in achievement for different groups of apprentices. Apprentices aged 16 to 23, and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, do not achieve as well as other apprentices. Leaders and managers have not identified specific strategies to reduce these gaps.
- Most learners aged 16 to 19 progress to positive destinations, such as paid employment, apprenticeships, university or further study. The proportion of these learners who progress into employment that relates to their programme of study is high. A small minority of adult learners do not secure employment or go on to further study. Too many apprentices do not keep their jobs following completion of their course.
- The proportion of apprentices who achieve their qualifications within the planned timescales, although improving, is low. A high proportion of apprentices in the current year continue to make slow progress, particularly in health and social care, construction and electrotechnical apprenticeships.
- In 2016/17, too few learners made the progress in GCSE English and mathematics of which they were capable. Although better than in the previous year, not enough learners improved their grades at GCSE in English and mathematics, and too many learners did not achieve GCSE grades A* to C or grades 9 to 4. The majority of current learners do not

make the progress of which they are capable in GCSE English and mathematics.

Types of provision

16 to 19 study programmes

Good

- Currently, there are 1,862 learners on a range of 16 to 19 study programmes from entry level to level 3. The majority of learners are on A-level courses and vocational courses in construction and building services, creative arts and media, and sport.
- Lecturers use their industrial expertise and knowledge well to develop learners' practical skills and prepare them for work. For example, level 1 plumbing learners used soldering equipment proficiently when installing bathroom fittings in confined spaces. Level 2 professional cookery learners demonstrated high levels of professionalism in a busy kitchen when filleting mackerel.
- Most lecturers plan and provide learning activities that engage and challenge learners to achieve their potential. Learners demonstrate good independent learning skills and have the confidence to put their newly acquired skills into practice. For example, level 3 art and design learners explored the reproduction of images using different media. They trialled new methods and experimented with printmaking. In a minority of vocational theory lessons, learners do the same activity and at the same pace. Lecturers do not sufficiently challenge the most able. Consequently, they do not make the progress of which they are capable.
- Leaders and managers have ensured that the principles and requirements of the study programme are met. Learners enjoy enrichment activities and meaningful high-quality work experience. As a result, they develop a good understanding of the world of work. Following successful work placements, a significant minority of learners have been offered employment. For example, learners in hospitality and catering have job offers with prestigious restaurants. Traineeship learners secure business apprenticeships with their work placement employer. A very large majority of learners go on to further study, apprenticeships or employment on completion of their courses.
- Most learners improve their mathematical skills because lecturers effectively integrate activities to develop these skills into lessons. For example, in A-level business studies, learners used mental arithmetic to calculate profitability using ratios. Lecturers do not routinely correct spelling, punctuation and grammatical errors in learners' marked work, such as the correct use of capital letters and nouns. As a result, learners continue to make the same mistakes. Learners' progress in both GCSE English and mathematics is slow.
- Lecturers provide effective feedback to learners in lessons that helps them improve. The vast majority of learners are making good progress on their course. For example, level 3 engineering learners engaged in lively discussions about the strengths of different metals and their suitability for use in presswork. They then worked out the tensile strength of each metal and whether it could or could not be used.
- Learners demonstrate a good awareness and implementation of health and safety. They know how to keep themselves and others safe in the workplace. Learners know how to work safely with tools, equipment and chemicals and they wear the correct personal

protective equipment for each task.

- Learners have access to good-quality impartial careers advice and guidance. Staff provide drop-in sessions, individual appointments and group tutorial sessions. Consequently, most learners have high aspirations and clear career pathways that are directly related to their vocational or academic programmes of study.

Adult learning programmes

Good

- There are currently 1,273 adult learners from entry level to level 4 studying full- and part-time. Learners enrol in a range of vocational qualifications, as well as English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), functional skills and GCSE qualifications in English and mathematics. The largest enrolments in vocational courses are in construction and building services, hairdressing, beauty therapy, business and accounting, and access to higher education.
- The vast majority of learners enjoy their studies and make good progress. Learners benefit from supportive feedback from lecturers which challenges and encourages most of them to improve the standard of their work. Learners are proud of their work and develop increased levels of confidence and self-esteem as a result of their learning.
- Learners develop a wide range of professional skills, knowledge and understanding of behaviours such as empathy and advocacy. They effectively put into practice what they have learned. For example, when role-playing case reviews, access to higher education learners evaluated the influence of cognitive development theories on the role of play in child learning behaviour.
- Lecturers integrate mathematics effectively into lessons. As a result, learners develop their numeracy skills, including costings, calculations and measurements. For example, learners on floristry courses costed out a variety of floral arrangements to calculate profit-and-loss margins. Learners on hospitality courses calculated the cost of ingredients for the dishes they cooked.
- Learners are confident in using a range of technical terms and specialist vocabulary. In floristry, lecturers frequently check learners' spelling and pronunciation of botanical names for flowers and vegetation. Learners maintain their written skills through the completion of various documents used in the workplace or on placement, for example observations of children's development in nursery settings and client records in hairdressing, beauty therapy and dentistry.
- Learners are aware of how to keep themselves and those in their care safe. They understand why health and safety and safeguarding are important in the workplace. As a result, learners apply what they have learned in lessons when on work placements and at work.
- Learners benefit from the promotion of British values, equality and diversity in lessons. Consequently, they extend their knowledge and understanding of these important topics. For example, beauty therapy learners discussed British values during a 1960s make-up activity. They debated how changes in views and culture over time have impacted on society. ESOL learners embodied the British values of mutual respect, tolerance and democracy through discussions about traditional gender roles within the family and in different cultures.

- Leaders and managers develop the adult learning curriculum well to meet local needs and priorities. Around one quarter of adult learners study English and mathematics qualifications to improve their chances of gaining employment. Courses such as access to higher education have been developed to meet local healthcare sector needs. Learners on vocational courses develop creative and practical skills to appropriate industry standards. The proportion of learners who do not progress into employment or further study on completion of their course is too high.
- Lecturers in a small minority of lessons do not plan and provide activities effectively to meet the needs of all learners. Learners, therefore, become disengaged and make slow progress.
- Attendance is too low in a minority of adult lessons.

Apprenticeships

Requires improvement

- The college has 675 apprentices, around half of whom are studying at intermediate level and most are aged over 19 years. The greatest proportion are on electrotechnical and construction apprenticeships. The vast majority of current apprentices are on frameworks, with approximately 20 newer recruits on standards in electrotechnical level 3 and housing level 4.
- Just under half of current apprentices are making slow progress towards completion of their apprenticeship programmes.
- Assessors and lecturers do not routinely carry out an assessment of apprentices' vocational skills at the start of a programme. As a result, lecturers do not have enough understanding of the skills that apprentices need to develop to provide teaching and learning activities to meet their individual needs. Apprentices in the majority of lessons complete the same activities regardless of their existing skills and experience. This results in the most and least able apprentices becoming disengaged, and they make slow progress.
- When setting targets, staff do not focus sufficiently on the development of apprentices' new skills, knowledge and behaviours at work. Apprentices know which aspect of the qualification they need to work on next but they do not know which skills they need to develop further to become more effective in their roles. Assessors do not consistently and clearly identify what apprentices need to do to improve. For example, following reviews, assessors did not set clear targets for health and social care apprentices that focused on the skills that they needed to develop and improve.
- As a result of the steps taken by managers, attendance and achievement in English and mathematics have improved for current apprentices. Although attendance in English and mathematics lessons is now in line with attendance in vocational lessons, it is below the college's expectations. Pass rates for current apprentices who have taken examinations in these subjects have improved compared to the previous academic year, but a high proportion of apprentices have yet to take the examinations.
- Lecturers support apprentices well to develop their mathematics skills. Apprentices are able to state specific skills they have learned and improved. For example, apprentices in joinery explained the scale they used on a technical drawing of a joint. They relayed how they will use the skill on-site when constructing joints for window frames.

- Lecturers do not develop apprentices' written English skills well enough. As a result, apprentices make slow progress. In a minority of English lessons, lecturers do not plan and deliver learning effectively to meet apprentices' individual areas for improvement. Apprentices working independently on activities set by the lecturer do not always understand what they are being asked to do. Although assessors provide feedback to learners about punctuation and grammar errors in their work, in a minority of cases, it is not having an impact because assessors do not check that apprentices have acted on the guidance they have been given. As a result, apprentices continue to make the same errors in later submissions.
- Too many apprentices do not have a good enough understanding of the dangers of radicalisation and extremism. Managers have not ensured that apprentices receive the same information and support on these issues that other learners receive.
- Workplace assessments and progress review visits are timely. Assessors question apprentices effectively. Apprentices identify how they will use what they have learned in their roles. For example, health and social care apprentices explained exactly what they learned the previous day about using a hoist. Through skilful questioning, the assessor encouraged apprentices to think about what may be different when using the hoist within a hospital setting. Apprentices are able to explain the limitations of space and the considerations they need to make around patient dignity.
- Employers support apprentices effectively in the workplace. Employers support apprentices to develop a good range of practical skills at work and enable them to practise these skills while carrying out their jobs. Employers often give apprentices a greater level of responsibility or project work to enable them to develop their skills further. For example, level 3 customer services apprentices have been given the responsibility of developing the social media platform for their employer.
- Apprentices develop their confidence, communication and teamworking skills during their apprenticeships. This supports them to develop productive working relationships at work and makes a positive contribution to the employer's business. For example, business administration apprentices gain the confidence to apply for vacancies at work, which they are successful in securing.
- Leaders and managers plan and manage apprenticeship standards to meet the principles and requirements of an apprenticeship.
- College staff work well in partnership with employers. They develop and deliver apprenticeship provision aligned to local business needs. In the majority of cases, staff use these partnerships effectively to plan programmes that meet the needs of the employer and add value to their business. Where appropriate, apprentices enjoy developing additional skills. They work towards extra qualifications that add value to their programmes. For example, health and social care apprentices undertake mentoring and sign language qualifications. As a result, care assistants are now better able to communicate with patients with hearing impairments.

Provision for learners with high needs

Good

- The college receives funding for 52 high needs learners. Thirty eight are based at

Thornton College, which is a dedicated campus offering specialist courses. These learners follow 'pathway to independence' or 'pathways to further education and employment' programmes. The remaining learners with high needs study a range of vocational courses from pre-entry to level 3 at the main campus in Bootle.

- Managers have high expectations of learners on specialist courses. They provide an interesting and varied curriculum, including cooking, art and essential everyday living skills, for example a communication project in conjunction with a college for learners with high needs in Australia. Learners have produced videos and electronic presentations about their countries to share with each other. They used laptops for research and created paintings of lizards in an Aboriginal style and worked well on tasks which were appropriate to their targets and individual abilities.
- In specialist programmes, learners enjoy a thorough assessment of their starting points before they enrol. They visit the college regularly before they start their programme. Lecturers design activities to build on learners' previous achievements. Consequently, learners settle in quickly and make good progress. Learners with high needs on vocational courses do not always receive the same level of introduction into college life or information, advice and guidance. As a result, a higher proportion of learners with high needs on vocational courses leave their programme early compared to those on specialist programmes.
- At Thornton College, managers put in place specialist support, such as on-site speech and language therapy, and invest in specialist equipment. As a result, learners are further enabled to overcome their barriers to independence. For example, managers have successfully worked with the local hospital and a physiotherapist to enable learners to join in with wheelchair football and travel with fellow learners in the minibus rather than in a separate taxi. Managers use high needs funding effectively.
- Learners on specialist courses make good progress in improving their English and mathematics skills. Learners develop literacy skills successfully in the majority of lessons, including spelling, handwriting and oracy skills. For example, in a theory lesson, learners were able to describe why a description matched a shape, according to their individual abilities. They used effective problem-solving and an appropriate level of mathematical skills to identify a sphere and a rectangle.
- Learners who intend to leave at the end of the year visit their next destination regularly. Where appropriate, they undertake relevant, carefully chosen work experience, for example in a community coffee shop, the kitchen of a care home and a local library. Work experience placements that the most able learners attend do not challenge them enough to achieve their full potential.
- Staff regularly check and record learners' progress on specialist courses. They promptly set new, challenging targets for their next steps. Learners develop good relationships with staff. As a result, they gain confidence and take pride in their work and make gradual but important steps towards independence. The monitoring of learners' progress on vocational courses is not as thorough. Staff do not review targets sufficiently to set learners challenging enough targets to ensure that they all make the progress of which they are capable.
- Learners on specialist programmes know their targets and which ones they have achieved. They enjoy their programmes and learn useful new skills through their enrichment activities. For example, many learners have joined a signing choir where they

sing songs and have learned Makaton. Learners' attendance is good.

- Lecturers do not always ensure that learning support staff provide the correct level of support so that learners participate effectively in specialist and vocational lessons. Support arrangements are not always put in place quickly enough to support learners with high needs on vocational courses. Consequently, a few learners do not make the progress of which they are capable.

Full-time provision for 14- to 16-year-olds

Good

- There are currently 178 full-time learners aged 14 to 16, of which 91 are in Year 10 and 87 in Year 11. Many learners experienced disruption to their education before starting at the college. A large proportion did not progress well through key stage 3 schooling. The college offers a broad curriculum that meets statutory key stage 4 requirements. Learners study a mix of GCSE and vocational courses that prepare them well for their next steps.
- In the majority of cases, lecturers plan, prepare and deliver interesting and engaging lessons that promote good progress, based on learners' needs. For example, learners on a catering course research recipes using a mystery bag of ingredients. They plan to prepare, cook and serve the dish professionally, developing technical catering skills alongside creativity and resourcefulness.
- Lecturers and assistants identify where learners need further help and support them well. In chemistry, teaching assistants support learners effectively to work through extra questions. They check their understanding and encourage independent learning and concentration. In a few lessons, lecturers do not routinely provide challenging tasks for the most able learners. As a result, these learners find the work too easy and some display low-level disruptive behaviour. Consequently, these learners do not make enough progress.
- Learners gain good practical skills in their vocational lessons, preparing them well for further studies and employment. For example, in painting and decorating, learners used the correct brushes for painting different surfaces. They successfully applied wallpaper horizontally using the concertina method. Performing arts learners performed a well-coordinated short musical theatre routine. They incorporated dance and singing with energy and focus.
- Learners develop their English and mathematical skills well in lessons. Lecturers encourage learners to extend their vocabulary and use appropriate terminology. Learners improve their confidence in using numeracy to solve problems and complete practical tasks. For example, learners on an automotive course were confident in their use of formulae to work out tyre pressures. In a small minority of lessons, lecturers do not routinely check that learners have acted on the feedback given on their written work. As a result, a few learners continue to make the same mistakes in their spelling, punctuation and grammar. GCSE English and mathematics lecturers struggle to meet the needs of the range of abilities of all learners.
- Leaders, managers and staff have high expectations of learners. They work hard to ensure that learners are supported and nurtured to do their best. Recently appointed leaders of the full-time 14 to 16 provision have improved the way in which learners' progress is monitored. Lecturers use the assessment of learners' starting points effectively

to set learners challenging targets and actions for improvement. Consequently, the majority of learners understand what they need to do to improve.

- Leaders use the pupil premium well to ensure that these learners make good progress, engage with their learning and achieve as well as their peers. Teaching and learning assistants support learners in lessons well. They help them to improve their concentration, independence and subject-specific vocabulary. Extra revision sessions, the funding of trips and visits and the provision of rewards for improved attendance and behaviour motivate learners to achieve and make progress.
- Leaders ensure that the discrete area for learners aged 14 to 16 is safe and secure. They make appropriate checks and monitor that learners are safe when they access other areas and attend work experience at external venues. Learners feel safe in college and have a good understanding of how to stay safe online. They can explain what it means to be radicalised and can give examples of groups who promote extreme views. The tutorial programme is focused on key topics that may affect young people, such as knife crime, child sexual exploitation and bullying.
- Leaders and staff develop learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding successfully. The curriculum includes lessons in personal, social and religious education to meet the statutory requirements of key stage 4. Learners, a high proportion of whom have complex social, emotional and behavioural issues, benefit from highly effective personal and pastoral support. Consequently, they engage more successfully in college and at home and make progress in their studies.
- In the majority of lessons, learners' behaviour is good. They concentrate on their work, ask questions and work well, both independently and with their peers. For example, learners in science worked well together to describe the process of distillation and correctly label a diagram. In a minority of lessons, lecturers do not act promptly to address low-level inappropriate behaviour. Attendance in too many lessons is low due to the very poor attendance of a minority of learners.
- Lecturers plan appropriate work experience and enrichment activities that allow learners to develop their employability skills well. For example, learners took part in mock interviews led by local employers. They develop their confidence, communication and curriculum vitae writing skills.
- Learners receive the careers advice and guidance that they need to make informed choices about their next steps. A high proportion of learners progress to further study and a few go onto an apprenticeship or employment.

Provider details

Unique reference number	130490
Type of provider	General further education college
Age range of learners	14+
Approximate number of all learners over the previous full contract year	4,866
Principal/CEO	Yanina Williams
Telephone number	0151 353 4600
Website	www.hughbaird.uk.com/

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)	162	311	926	583	774	362	-	17
Number of apprentices by apprenticeship level and age	Intermediate		Advanced		Higher			
	16–18	19+	16–18	19+	16–18	19+		
	127	202	76	231	-	39		
Number of traineeships	16–19		19+		Total			
	16		2		18			
Number of learners aged 14 to 16	178							
Number of learners for which the provider receives high-needs funding	52							
At the time of inspection, the provider contracts with the following main subcontractors:	Absolute Training Solutions							

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the vice-principal curriculum and quality, 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

Alison Cameron Brandwood, lead inspector	Her Majesty's Inspector
Andrea Machell	Her Majesty's Inspector
Michelle Brabner	Ofsted Inspector
Malcolm Bruce	Ofsted Inspector
Dilys Taylor	Ofsted Inspector
Sarah McGrath	Ofsted Inspector
Sylvia Farrier	Ofsted Inspector
Susan Gay	Ofsted Inspector
Paul Cocker	Her Majesty's Inspector

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