

Inspection of The Windsor Forest Colleges Group

Inspection dates: 26–29 November 2019

Overall effectiveness	Good
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The quality of education	Good
Behaviour and attitudes	Good
Personal development	Good
Leadership and management	Good
Education programmes for young people	Good
Adult learning programmes	Good
Apprenticeships	Good
Provision for learners with high needs	Requires improvement
Overall effectiveness at previous inspection	Not previously inspected

Information about this provider

The Windsor Forest Colleges Group was formed in May 2017 following the merger of East Berkshire College and Strode’s College. The group has three main campuses namely Langley College, Strode’s College and Windsor College, as well as additional learning centres in community locations, including Southall as the largest. Leaders offer education programmes in almost all sector subject areas.

At the time of the inspection, there were around 2,680 learners on education programmes for young people, with approximately two thirds at level 3. The largest subjects are business, science and arts programmes. Most adult learners are on part-time programmes in English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), English and mathematics. A small number of adults study on full-time programmes, including access to higher education courses in nursing and social work. There are 315 apprentices with just over half on frameworks. Most apprentices are studying engineering or construction programmes. There are 45 learners in receipt of high-needs funding, of whom 29 are in specialist provision. At the time of the inspection, the group worked with one subcontractor offering provision to 12 apprentices.

What is it like to be a learner with this provider?

Learners and apprentices benefit from a calm and respectful learning environment. They value, and gain confidence from, the high levels of support and care from staff. Behaviour in lessons and across all college centres is very good and learners feel safe.

Learners on education programmes for young people benefit from an extensive academic and vocational curriculum offer. After good advice from staff, they choose programmes that meet their needs well. For example, learners can study on vocational programmes alongside A-level courses. This allows them to gain a broad mix of knowledge and skills, which helps them to succeed and move to the next level of education or into employment.

Learners receive effective careers guidance. Most learners who intend to progress to higher education do so, often to their first-choice institution. A high proportion of adult learners achieve their qualifications and gain employment or promotion or are able to be more active in their community as a result of their achievements. A large majority of apprentices who complete their programme progress to sustained employment.

Learners benefit from vocational staff who are industry professionals and academic staff who continue to develop their own subject knowledge through external study. For example, learners on creative media courses benefit from their teachers' current professional practice as photographers and artists.

What does the provider do well and what does it need to do better?

Since the merger in 2017, governors and senior leaders have ensured that they continue to serve their local communities well with a broad and relevant curriculum offer. Leaders and managers work with local employers and partners to plan and review their provision so that it is focused on current industry practices.

Most curriculum managers ensure that the chosen curriculum helps learners and apprentices to develop new knowledge, skills and behaviours. For adult learners, the curriculum content is closely linked to the needs of the community and the local employment market. For example, adult learners on ESOL courses can now more confidently support their children at school, as well as develop skills to apply for employment locally.

Teachers sequence and deliver the curriculum in a logical and well-planned way. Learners build on the key knowledge and skills they have learned, consolidate these through practice and apply them effectively in both practical and theoretical situations. For example, sports learners applied and deepened their learning of psychological theories of personality to contemporary examples from the sporting world. Teachers of adult learners on the access to nursing programme ensure their

learners have fully grasped the foundations of diet and nutrition before moving on to learn about nutritional diseases.

Assessors ensure that the sequencing of training for most apprentices is logical and builds on prior learning. For example, apprentices develop a sound understanding of the theory of vehicle electrics before diagnosing and rectifying faults. As a result, they quickly develop confidence to manage complex tasks independently. Assessors do not provide guidance on final assessments and grades. As a result, apprentices are not aware of what they need to do to achieve a merit or distinction.

Teachers use homework and assessment to understand learners' progress and to make decisions about the next phase of the curriculum. In A-level mathematics and psychology, teachers make use of frequent assessments to check understanding and address any gaps in learning. Teachers give helpful feedback on learners' work so that they are clear on what they need to do to improve.

Teachers work well with support staff to ensure that learners with high needs who are studying academic or vocational qualifications are well supported in these lessons. Learners with high needs who attend specialist provision often learn very little that is new. They do not develop the social communication skills they need to be fully independent. Too many teachers do not plan or sequence the learning in a way that would support these learners to build on their previous knowledge and skills.

Assessors and a few teachers do not support all apprentices and learners to develop their written work to prepare them for higher level study. In particular, apprentices' written work contains too many errors in sentence structure. Assessors do not correct these errors, and as a result, apprentices' use of English is not sufficiently developed.

Learners and apprentices in a few areas, for example electrical engineering and construction courses, do not achieve well or take too long to achieve. A minority of learners on a small number of A-level courses fail to complete their qualifications or achieve the grades of which they are capable. Learners studying English at Langley College do not improve their English skills and too few pass their qualifications.

Curriculum leaders do not place sufficient emphasis for all learners on the importance of high-quality and meaningful work placements. A small proportion of learners on education programmes for young people are either not offered work experience opportunities or are unable to reflect on the placements they may have attended. As a result, these learners do not benefit from gaining an insight into the world of work in their chosen vocational field.

Attendance to lessons is generally good for learners on education programmes for young people, although it is low on a small minority of vocational courses as well as on a few courses for adult learners. Learners are usually on time to lessons, but

when they are not, teachers do not routinely challenge them. As a result, the few learners who are late neither improve their punctuality nor recognise the importance of this for their future.

Learners develop a good understanding of wider society through a well-planned tutorial programme as well as the promotion of relevant content in lessons. Teachers encourage learners to take an active interest in current affairs and to be critical thinkers. For example, A-level learners debated the recent banning of a film from a cinema chain, and access learners discussed the potential impact of bias in interviews.

Leaders and managers do not make sure that learners at different college centres benefit from areas of staff expertise through collaborative working and sharing of good practice. As a result, A-level history learners at one campus make at least good and often excellent progress from their starting points, while at another, learners make poor progress.

Governors demonstrate that they know the strengths and weaknesses of the group. They use detailed reports from the principal to challenge the senior team to make improvements. Since the merger of the colleges, leaders have made improvements, but the rate of improvement has been too slow in a few areas.

Safeguarding

The arrangements for safeguarding are effective.

Governors and staff complete frequent and appropriate training to make sure they know how to protect learners. Safeguarding staff closely monitor all reported incidents of safeguarding. They refer learners to external networks, including the police and social services as required and promptly. The designated lead reports safeguarding incidents to governors and senior leaders. Learners feel safe and know whom to speak to if they have any concerns about themselves and others. Learners have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe online. However, they do not all have a good knowledge of radicalisation and how it may apply to them.

What does the provider need to do to improve?

- Leaders and managers must ensure that managers in the weaker subject areas make more rapid improvements so that all learners and apprentices, including learners with high needs on specialist provision, benefit from a good quality of education.
- Leaders and managers should improve attendance and punctuality so that all learners and apprentices make the progress of which they are capable.
- Leaders and managers must ensure that apprenticeship staff inform apprentices at an earlier stage of the requirements of the end-point assessments. Staff must support apprentices to achieve merits or distinctions and ensure the development of English skills throughout their programmes.

- Leaders and managers must ensure that all learners benefit from an appropriate range of work-related encounters, including high-quality and meaningful work experience placements, so that learners can gain a good insight and develop appropriate new skills.

Provider details

Unique reference number	130604
Address	Station Road Langley Slough Berkshire SL3 8BY
Contact number	01753 793000
Website	www.windsor-forest.ac.uk
CEO	Kate Webb
Provider type	General further education college
Date of previous inspection	Not previously inspected
Main subcontractors	Allan Hester Associates

Information about this inspection

The inspection team was assisted by the principal, as nominee. Inspectors took account of the provider's most recent self-assessment report and development plans, and the previous inspection report. The inspection was carried out using the [further education and skills inspection handbook](#) and took into account all relevant provision at the provider. Inspectors collected a wide range of evidence to inform judgements, including observing learning sessions, scrutinising learners' work, seeking the views of learners, staff and other stakeholders, and examining the provider's documentation and records.

Inspection team

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